SAMAREN ROY

A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY

SHOUT
SHARE
IT

Samaren Roy first met M. N. Roy (no relation) in 1939 when he was an undergraduate student and M. N. Roy was actively engaged in establishing a younger leftist leadership to counter the Gandhian dominance in the Indian National Congress. Writing an authoritative biography of M. N. Roy was a daunting task, especially since he never kept a dairy - it would have been too unsafe. Roy also wrote his *Memoirs* so late that he left out many of the dates he couldn't remember. Further, his associates who were interviewed for this study were also old men inclined either to forget, or confused and inclined to hagiography.

This political biography traces the life of M. N. Roy from his early years to the Russian Revolution of 1917, which deeply drew him to Marxism and led him to found the first communist party outside Russia in 1919 in Mexico. The study takes us from 1915 through 1931 when Roy, as a fugitive from the British police, had fled to America; his expulsion from the Comintern in 1929; his unhappy relations with the British communists, his return to India and involvement with the struggle for independence, his differences with Gandhi and Nehru, and his eventual disappointment with the look of Free India. This biography traces his deep intellectual bonding with Marxist thought and simultaneous gradual disillusionment with the autocratic, nationalist and colonial aspects of Marxism to a final lasting, belief in democracy and commitment to a scientific, humanist and moral kind of socialist thought.

ISBN 81 250 0299 5

Rs 140.00

M. N. ROY

A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY

SAMAREN ROY

Orient Longman

ORIENT LONGMAN LIMITED

Registered Office
3-6-272 Himayatnagar
Hyderabad 500 029, (A.P.)

Other Offices
CALCUTTA CHENNAI MUMBAI NEW DELHI
Bangalore Bhubaneswar Ernakulam Guwahati Hyderabad
Jaipur Lucknow Patna

© Orient Longman Limited 1997

First published 1997

ISBN 81 250 0299 5

Typeset by
Sunny Computer Lines
202, Dakha Chambers, 2nd Floor
Naiwala, Karol Bagh
New Delhi 110 005

Printed in India at
Baba Barkha Nath Printers
26/7 Najafgarh Road Industrial Area
New Delhi 110 015

Published by
Orient Longman Limited
1/24 Asaf Ali Road
New Delhi 110 002

Contents

Preface vii

1. From Nationalism to Internationalism 1

2. The Moscow Years 38

3. The Comintern Years 64

4. Roy and Indian Politics 98

5. Epilogue 128

Index 139

Preface

Assembling facts about M. N. Roy, especially his early life and life abroad, has not been an easy task. He never kept a diary — it would have been unsafe for him and others if he had done so. He also wrote his *Memoirs* so late that instead of taxing his memory he largely did away with dates. A biographer, however, cannot take the same liberty.

Many who knew him, or had been associated with him in the years prior to his return to India in 1930, were alive when this study on him was undertaken. As many of them as was possible have been interviewed. But they too were old men who had not kept diaries, were hard put to recall events of half a century ago, and to interject their views, more often than not acquired subsequent to the events being recalled.

Some of them were inclined to hagiography too, because at the superficial level Roy had not been a successful man. Nor however did success bless the efforts of a host of others, and that host included such illustrious names as Aurobindo Ghosh, Bipin Chandra Pal, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Chittaranjan Das. Very few struggles have succeeded in a single generation. And though Aurobindo and Roy lived to see India attain freedom neither of them could claim any credit for it. In Roy's case, he was, further, disappointed with the look of free India.

Certain things, however, are clear. Roy was one of the five outstanding revolutionaries of the decade from 1905 to 1915. No wonder the Sedition Committee Report of 1918 identified Tilak and Roy as the principal seditionists, and the Rowlatt Act of 1919 was enacted to curb their activities. Also few people had had the distinction of being accused in three significant conspiracy cases — Howrah (1910), Kanpur (1924) and Meerut (1929) — and being in the wings of a fourth, the Peshawar, the latter being a series of three between 1922 and 1924 started on the detection of emissaries sent by Roy from Moscow.

M. N. Roy began writing his *Memoirs* in 1949, when was sixty-two, and out of the race for political leadership. He loved life and freedom, and did not attach much value to success. Among the Indian political leaders, of the right or the left, none could succeed except as a protege of Gandhi. There are two exceptions : C. R. Das and M.A. Jinnah. The former died early in 1925. Neither Das nor Jinnah were leftist leaders, which Roy was, and so they did not have to struggle against the inertia of Indian thought and economic organization.

Jawaharlal Nehru often disagreed with Gandhi but on each occasion ultimately submitted to the leader. Roy's differences with Gandhi went deeper than political manoeuvring for he did not subscribe to the ideal, *brahmacharya* or Indian spiritualism. In the twenty-four years after his return to India Roy was too impecunious to have a lifestyle any other than an ascetic's. Yet he was not prepared to make a virtue of his necessity. In his writings he not only criticized the ascetic ideal but also *brahmacharya* and food taboos.

When Roy wrote his *Memoirs,* he had not only been busy re-examining his own career but also the respective roles of reason and romanticism in revolution. About his early days, though in the immediate context of the statement it would mean the Mexican years, he pleaded that he called himself "a revolutionary, contemptuous of romanticism".

Roy's early writings were calculated to not only "preferring unpopularity to paying the price of success" but to court unpopularity so as to shock the population into re-examining the ideals it was supposed to uphold and expected to value. For this, he advocated and campaigned for philosophical revolution in India as a precondition for independence.

1

From Nationalism to Internationalism

Narendranath Bhattacharya, who later became famous as M.N. Roy, was born into a priestly family. His father, Dinabandhu Bhattacharya, was the last in the line of high priests at the temple of the goddess Ksheputeswari in the village Ksheput, in Midnapur district in south Bengal. Dinabandhu, the eldest son in the family, who would automatically have become the high priest,[1] left the village and took the job of Sanskrit teacher in a school in Arbelia, a village in the eastern part of the 24 Parganas district near Calcutta. Narendranath, his fourth child—the second by his second wife--was born in Arbelia on 21 March 1887.[2] After his retirement Dinabandhu moved to Changripota, the village his second wife came from, about twelve miles south of Calcutta, in 1899.

This region, particularly the area comprising the villages Changripota, Kodalia, Harinavi and Rajpur, was a breeding ground for new ideas and social movements. Many social and religious reformers of nineteenth century Bengal were born in this region. Notable among them were Rajnarain Bose (the maternal grandfather of Sri Aurobindo and Barin Ghosh), Dwarkanath Vidyabhusan, editor of *Som Prakasa* and associate of Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, and Dwarkanath's nephew Pandit Sivanath Sastri, a

great scholar who tore off his Brahmanic sacred thread to join the new reformist movement, the Brahmo Samaj. Sastri was an uncle of Narendranath's mother and had a perceptible influence on the younger members of the family. He, along with Rajnarain Bose made one of the early attempts at founding a secret revolutionary society in Bengal. Another man who influenced young Narendranath was a Brahmo, Umesh Datta, who was the former headmaster of the local school. Narendranath revived the local library which Datta had founded in memory of Dwarkanath Vidyabhusan.

Naren's cousin and life-long political associate, Harikumar Chakravarty remembers him as an adventure-loving youth when he came to know him in 1899. "He loved to walk long distances and wander about from orchard to orchard. He was constantly searching for something distant, something beyond and spent many nights in the cremation ground, which later became his favourite spot for secret meetings of his revolutionary group."[3] Love of adventure and a quest for the unknown made Naren restless. He often walked all the way to Belur Math (founded by Swami Vivekananda at a distance of about 30 miles from Changripota) and to other *ashrams* and *maths* in his search for knowledge and truth. He had also begun studying Sanskrit and ancient Indian texts from his father at an early age.

Sometime in early 1901, young Naren met Sivnarain Swami, reputedly a fugitive from the abortive Revolt of 1857, who believed that Hindu society had degenerated because of caste divisions and many other ills it had imbibed through centuries of stagnation. Sivnarain Swami was trying to find men whom he could train for the resurrection of Hindu society. He was impressed by young Naren's dedication and gave him lessons in yoga as well as revolutionary politics.[4] Yet the soul of the restless young man was not satisfied. He went from one sadhu to another, from one *ashram* to another, while practising yoga. One day Naren told Harikumar, "the sun is the giver of all energies and I want to know what this primal force is".[5] It was during this quest for truth and knowledge that Naren came to the famous Vaishnava sadhu of the time, Ramdas Babaji, and began taking lessons from him. Ramdas Babaji, like

Naren's former guru Sivnarain Swami, was so impressed by young Naren's dedication that he too wanted to make him his chief disciple and a sanyasi."[6] But religious or spiritual truth alone did not satisfy Naren. One night in the winter of 1903 he told Harikumar and Saileswar Bose, "We have to do something".[7] The three friends decided to leave their homes before dawn the next morning to find the meaning of truth.[8] Naren went to Arbelia and met his cousin Avinash Bhattacharya. Avinash had already joined the revolutionary centre, East Club, founded by Jatindranath Banerjee. On his return Naren called his friends and organised a similar centre at Changripota. This group later became a strong base of Jatin Mukherjee and played a vital role in organising an armed uprising in the wake of World War I.

Dinabandhu died in May 1905, when Naren was a high school student. The same year, Bengal was in a state of intense political ferment. The immediate cause was the decision of the British Viceroy, Lord Curzon, to partition Bengal. The revolutionary movement in Bengal "worked on the top of what is known as the anti-partition agitation".[9] Young Bengal, under the impact of resurgent Hindu militancy, chose the path of violence in opposition to the moderate policy of meetings and petitions. Their idealism was provided by Bankim Chandra and Swami Vivekananda.[10] At the annual session of the Indian National Congress in 1905, Sister Nivedita, Vivekananda's abbot associate and a product of Irish nationalism, urged that the attainment of political freedom should be the objective of the Indian people instead of individual *mukti* (salvation). For the first time, Bankim Chandra's poem, *Bande Mataram*, was sung at the opening of the Congress session; and Aurobindo wrote the pamphlet, *Bhawani Mandir,*[11] laying down the ideals and methods of the impending revolution.

Naren arranged a public meeting against the partition of Bengal in Kodalia and requested the new headmaster of the school for permission to hold the meeting in the school compound. When permission was refused, Naren decided to organise a procession in honour of the guest speaker, Surendranath Banerjee[12] and hold the meeting outside the school. But a new government circular

prohibited students from participating in anti-partition meetings and demonstrations. Naren and his seven friends, including Harikumar and Saileswar were expelled from the school. Naren told Harikumar, "The British cannot be driven out through meetings and demonstrations. They have to be driven out by force."[13] About this time, Ramdas Babaji again sent for Naren and Harikumar to persuade them to seek a spiritual path. "He talked with us the whole night," wrote Harikumar, "but his words fell on deaf ears. We had decided our course. Vivekananda's path was our path. Our god was our country. We had now before us the vision of Bankim Chandra's *Mother* that she would become."[14]

Naren and Harikumar then met Swami Saradananda of Belur Math who used to take classes on the *Gita* in the Anushilan Samiti, the major centre for revolutionaries founded in 1902. They were introduced to the Samiti's Secretary, Satish Bose, and they joined the Samiti as active members. In 1905 and 1906 Naren and Harikumar lived in the central office of the Samiti at 49 Cornwallis Street (now renamed Bidhan Sarani)[15]. They soon expanded this group and formed a branch of the Samiti in Changripota. Naren also took an active part in expanding the organisation of the Anushilam Samiti in different parts of Bengal. When Nalini Kar, a close associate of Jatin Mukherjee, first met Naren at the Samiti's central office in 1906, Naren had just returned from Malda in north Bengal where he had gone for organisational work.[16] The following year Naren was sent by the Anushilan Samiti to Jeypore in Orissa to organise relief work in Ruriahat camp. He was in charge of twelve centres. One of his fellow-workers, Dr. Aswini Roy remembers: "One day I observed that Naren did not eat anything at the end of the day's work. After all the volunteers had finished their meal in the evening I saw Naren walking up to the top of the dam wall. Here he sat in the posture of a *yogi* fixing his gaze on the moon. When he came down I asked him why he did this. After repeated requests, Naren told me, "Aswini, I am born in a poor family. There are so many great men in different parts of the world—I will never be able to meet them. So I look at the moon hoping that through the moon I may have some communication with them."[17]

Naren also wrote articles while in the Anushilan Samiti. He used to visit Kalinath Roy, then sub-editor of *The Bengalee* (later editor of the *Tribune*, Lahore) and Panchanan Majumdar of *New India*.[18] We do not have much evidence of his journalistic writings of that period, but according to one insider, in 1907 he wrote an article *'Bharater Raja Ke?'* (Who Rules India) in *Jugantar*, the revolutionary journal founded by Barin Ghosh, Avinash Bhattacharya and Bhupen Datta. In that article Naren is said to have written: "The voice of the people is the voice of God" and concluded that "it is only the people of India who can choose their ruler. The British have imposed their rule over India by force, and it is the birthright of the Indian people to defy and throw off the rule of the British from the country".[19]

Sometime in 1907 Naren met Jatin Mukherjee and the two soon became very close. Describing this as a turning point in his life, M.N. Roy later wrote, "At that time I did not know what was the attraction... later on, I realised what attracted me: It was his personality. Since then I have had the privilege of meeting outstanding personalities of our time. These were great men. Jatinda was a good man and I still have to find a better."[20] Soon after the meeting, Naren and Harikumar went to Ghedapahar hills in Bankura in south-west Bengal to learn the techniques of bomb-making and rifle shooting. They soon organised a group of about forty to fifty revolutionaries who believed in 'direct action'.[21] In the latter part of 1907 a series of political dacoities and terrorist activities took place inspired by the three journals, *Sandhya*, *Jugantar*, and *Bande Mataram*.[22] The first such dacoity was committed by Naren at Changripota railway station on 6 December 1907. Naren absconded, but was arrested when he came home following his mother's illness. She died in January 1908.

Around this time, revolutionaries threw a bomb at the carriage of Mr and Mrs Kennedy who were returning home from the club in Muzaffarpur, under the mistaken notion that the 'notorious' Magistrate Kingsford was in the carriage. This led to the arrest of Kshudiram Bose and the discovery of the underground conspiratorial centre at Manicktala in eastern Calcutta. In November

1908, Nandalal Banerjee, an officer in the Intelligence Branch of the Bengal Police was shot dead by Naren for arresting Kshudiram. Kshudiram was hanged.[23] This was followed by the arrest of Aurobindo, Barin and others in connection with the Alipore Conspiracy case. According to an Intelligence report, Naren "was said to have lived with Aravinda Ghosh, but on the latter's arrest in 1908, he left for Murshidabad."[24] Aurobindo's retirement from active politics after his acquittal and the long imprisonment of Barin Ghosh and his group, followed by the ban on the Anushilan Samiti brought about some disruption in the ranks of the revolutionaries. It was at this time that Naren and Jatin Mukherjee began organisational work and revolutionary activities and became close associates. Two centres were established, one was the Sramajibi Samabaya headed by Amarendra Nath Chattopadhyay[25] and the other in the name of S.D. Harry and Sons from where Harikumar Chakravarty began to operate. Naren committed several dacoities to raise funds for political activities.

It was from this time that Naren rose in the hierarchy of leadership. With his untiring energy, he contacted different leaders and groups to forge co-ordination and was preparing for guerilla warfare to drive the British out of this country. Nirvan Swami, who met Naren frequently in those days and was conducting the defence in the Howrah Conspiracy case, said that "Naren's political thinking was much ahead of others... Naren held socialistic views and never mixed religion with politics." Further, "Naren used to talk about what kind of government he wanted in replacement of the British rule and talked in terms of a people's government".[26] Another fellow-revolutionary, Bhupati Majumdar, (who later became a minister in the West Bengal government after Independence) remembers that "Naren was our leader in those days and talked politics in a much more advanced way than most of us. Naren had very radical ideas about rural economy."

Shamsul Alam, an Intelligence officer who was then preparing to arrest all the revolutionaries and commit them for trial in a single conspiracy case, was murdered by Biren Datta Gupta, one of Jatin Mukherjee's associates. This led to the arrests in the Howrah

Conspiracy case. Altogether 44 persons, including Naren and Jatin Mukherjee were arrested in this case on or about 29 January 1910. The committal order charged that the accused persons, "between the Christian years 1905 and 1910, both inclusive, at Shibpur in the district of Howrah and at other places in India, did conspire with one another and other persons... to wage war against His Majesty the King Emperor and deprive the King Emperor of the sovereignty of British India". The prosecution charged that "a large number of crimes of a political nature, collection of arms and ammunitions, and attempt to tamper with the loyalty of some sepoys of the 10th Jat Regiment and a large number of dacoities [were] carried out by '*bhadralogs*' with the object of securing funds for the purpose of the conspiracy"[27]

During the trial of this case, a group was formed in jail which became the nucleus of the most militant group of nationalist revolutionaries. The group foresaw the possibility of a world war and planned to launch a guerrilla war at that time, expecting assistance from Germany. The earlier revolutionaries did not concern themselves with anything beyond terrorising British administrators. The idea was primarily mooted by Barin Ghosh whose object was "to stir up the revolutionary fervour of the Bengalis". Hence when the police arrived at the Manicktala garden to arrest Barin and his group, Barin said his "mission was over". The Howrah conspirators were not content with mere terrorism and held much deeper political motives and aspirations. The Howrah case revealed that the groups were actively planning an insurrection against the government through building a nucleus of organisational networks throughout Bengal and maintaining links with other parts of the country; raising funds for political purposes, through dacoities; establishing links with the Indian sepoys in the British Indian army; and procuring firearms for the army of liberation. The Howrah conspirators were released after about a year for want of sufficient evidence. For Naren, this was the beginning of a period of intense organisational activity.

Jatindranath Banerjee, who had started the East Club in 1902, became a sanyasi in 1906 and went to the United Provinces (UP)

and Punjab to preach revolution. Banerjee was able to convert Ajit Singh and his brother Kissen Singh (father of Bhagat Singh). Lala Hardayal, on his return to India in 1908, also became interested in the programme of the Bengal revolutionaries through Kissen Singh. Hardayal went to America in 1911 and published a journal, *Ghadr* (Rebellion). He also established a centre in California, *Yugantar Ashram.* After Hardayal's arrest in America on the charge of being an 'anarchist' in March 1914, he escaped to Switzerland and Ramchandra took charge of the journal and the *Ashram.* Satyen Sen joined the group in San Francisco at that time. Sen was sent to America by Jatin Mukherjee to establish contacts with the *Ghadr Party.*[28] In November 1914 Satyen Sen returned to Calcutta with information about support from the Sikh community in the USA and Canada and introduced their leader Kartar Singh to Naren and Jatin Mukherjee in Calcutta.[29] Meanwhile, the German Consul General contacted the Bengal revolutionaries through D. Thibault, then Registrar of Calcutta University and Naren went to talk to him.[30] After discussions with the German diplomat, Naren requested Jatin Mukherjee, who was engaged in business in Jessore, to come to Calcutta. The German Consul General reported to Berlin that "the activities of the secret revolutionary societies [were] very significant, especially those of Bengal" and recommended that his "Government should avail itself of this opportunity of undermining British power and should help these revolutionaries actively.[31]

Naren and Jatin Mukherjee held several meetings with other revolutionaries and discussed plans for armed insurrection in India on the outbreak of war. Naren argued that British force in India would be so depleted during the war that there would be very little of it left to resist the revolutionaries and all steps would be taken to stop reinforcements coming from outside. An elaborate plan for attacking Fort William in Calcutta and blowing up bridges and railways was later revealed in the *Seditions Committee Report* of 1918.

Jatin Mukherjee had in the meanwhile been elected supreme commander in a hurriedly convened meeting of different groups and leaders of Bengal. On 26 August 1914, ten cases of arms and

ammunitions containing 50 Mauser pistols and 46,000 rounds of ammunition were looted from Roddea and Company, an arms dealer.[32] Naren established a secret hideout for training the revolutionary leaders. On 12 February 1915, he looted cash from Bird and Company in a daring dacoity in broad daylight, which came to be known as the sensational Garden Reach Dacoity. Naren was arrested. An unnerved Jatin Mukherjee met the government lawyer, Tarak Sadhu, and arranged for his bail by requesting Purna Das, leader of the Faridpur group, to ask one of his men who was also arrested in this case, to admit that he had committed the dacoity. Immediately after release on bail, Naren went underground and committed several other dacoities.[33] Naren and Nalini Kar also arranged a secret hideout for Jatin Mukherjee at Mohandia in Orissa about 22 miles from Balasore. Jatin Mukherjee was provided with four armed guards equipped with Mauser pistols and proper ammunition.

The Germans had asked the Bengal revolutionaries to send a representative to Batavia to work out the details of a plan to deliver arms. Naren went to Batavia in April 1915 as an agent of Harry and Sons, under the assumed name of C.A. Martin. Harry and Sons became the link between Calcutta and Batavia. Naren returned from his first trip in the middle of June making arrangements to receive the cargo of *S.S. Maverick* at Rai Mangal, a remote island in the Sunderbans in southern Bengal. The cargo did not arrive. So Naren made his second trip to Batavia in August. Before going on his second trip Naren met Jatin Mukherjee at his Mohandia hideout and promised not to return without arms. Jatin Mukherjee told Naren at this second farewell meeting: "Come back, with or without arms". While passing through Manila, Naren read the report about Jatin Mukherjee's death in an encounter with the British police on 9 September 1915. His immediate resolve was that "Jatinda's death must be avenged". He travelled through the whole of south east Asia to find arms for the Indian revolution, eventually reaching San Francisco in 1916.

Naren went to USA for a number of reasons. The offer of German arms to Indian revolutionaries had been routed through

Indians in California. Also, Naren was on his way to Berlin to negotiate with the German authorities about funds for a new proposal to buy arms from China,[34] and California lay between Europe and Japan, his previous halt. Moreover, Dhangopal, younger brother of the revolutionary Jadugopal Mukherjee, lived in California. These facts were probably known to British Intelligence, and G.C. Denham, a senior Intelligence Officer in the Bengal Police, was sent to USA. to seek the extradition of Roy from the USA, and if not extradition, at least his expulsion as an alien.[35] In fact, throughout the ten months that Naren had taken to reach San Francisco after leaving India, he had been trailed by British Intelligence. So thoroughly had he been tracked that the morning after his landing at San Francisco he read a report in a local newspaper headlined, "Mysterious Alien Reaches America, Famous Brahmin Revolutionary or Dangerous German Spy."

Between 1859 and 1910 a small Indian population had settled in Canada and USA; around 10,000 by the time Naren reached that continent. Several Indian organisations set up around this time on the West Coast became active because they had a popular and relatively affluent base in Indian settlers. In 1906 Barkatullah and S.L. Joshi founded a pan-Aryan association. Barkatullah left for Japan in 1909 but work was carried on by the Indo-American National Association in California, set up by Ramnath Puri. (Barkatullah later became president of a free Indian government in exile set up in Afghanistan.) Puri founded his association in 1907-8. Its work was supplemented by Taraknath Das', *Free Hindusthan*, from Vancouver in Canada, which later shifted to nearby Seattle in the USA where British hints were less seriously taken note of by the local authorities. In 1913 two more organisations came up: the Pacific Coast Hindusthani Association at Oregon and the *Ghadr* at San Francisco, helped a great deal by the presence of Lala Hardayal[36] between 1911 and 1914. The other Ghadr activist was Ramchandra, who had reached San Francisco in 1913. Restrictions on Indian emigration to Canada and USA—two countries which provided the greatest opportunities—encouraged the growth of the West Coast organisations.

A group had come up in Berlin too which received encouragement from the Kaiser's government of Germany, and after the outbreak of the World War I, political and financial support. The Berlin Committee of Indian revolutionaries, which underwent several changes in nomenclature, became the dominant group because of the funds it commanded. It was ready to buy arms in neutral America and transport them in neutral ships for an armed uprising in India. Champakram Pillai started the Berlin group in October 1914, and secured its attachment to the German General Staff. Its most intelligent organiser was however Virendranath Chattopadhyaya, brother of Sarojini Naidu. Taraknath Das, Barkatullah, Herambalal Gupta, Bhupendranath Datta (brother of Swami Vivekananda) and Hardayal (who came from USA to join it) were its other important leaders. By the middle of 1915 the Indian Independence Committee was organized with Dr. Mohammed Mansoor[37] as its president.

The Berlin Committee funded the Ghadr in San Francisco but maintained a representative in New York who was to be in close contact with the German Embassy. The contact was through Franz von Papen, the military attaché. In San Francisco the contact was through Franz Bopp,[38] the Consul General and William von Brincken, his military attaché.[39] Von Papen arranged for the purchase of 8000 rifles and 4 million rounds of ammunition for Indian revolutionaries. The consignment was ready for shipment in January 1915 and loaded on the ship *Anne Larsen* which sailed on March 8, 1915 from San Diego in California, ostensibly for a Mexican port but really for the island of Socorro, 300 miles to the south. Here, the arms were to be transferred to another ship, *Maverick*, and taken to Batavia. Jitendra Nath Lahiri brought the information about the shipment to Calcutta, and went to Batavia in April 1915 to guide the *Maverick* to India so that the arms could be delivered in the Sunderbans in south Bengal in July 1915. Naren returned to India in the middle of June, but the *Maverick* did not arrive.

The *Maverick* sailed from San Pedro, another Californian port, on 23 April, 46 days after its scheduled date. But a minor mutiny

and a storm had driven *Anne Larsen* to an American port where its arms were seized. After a circuitous voyage the *Maverick* arrived in Batavia but without the arms and was seized by the Dutch authorities. The super cargo, John Starr-Hunt and four Indians who were abroad the ship, escaped but were caught at Singapore. The Indians were executed and Starr-Hunt after a short stay in Batavia returned to USA to testify at the San Francisco trial.[40] Naren met Starr-Hunt on his second visit to Batavia towards the end of August, before he reached Manila. From there he proceeded to Japan and China and finally towards USA to negotiate another arms deal.

By the time Naren arrived in San Francisco in June 1916 much had happened to encourage him to reconsider the attitudes which he had probably accepted as natural in the Indian environment. The most important event was the death of Jatin Mukherjee. Writing 35 years later in his *Memoirs* Naren recorded: "Jatinda's death had absolved me from the moral obligation to obey the order".[41] The realisation may not have come immediately but it was slowly growing, and loosening the ties which bound him to older men and their ideas. His disenchantment with older revolutionaries grew for other reasons as well. Between his two trips abroad in search of arms, Naren had paid a visit to Aurobindo Ghosh at Pondicherry in an attempt to induce the revolutionary turned hermit to return to political activity.[42] He failed, but the event could not but have made an impact on him. If the *Karmayogi*—the ideal of the activist that the revolutionaries had adopted from Vivekananda—could withdraw into religion, others could change their roles too. The other disappointment came in Japan when Rashbehari Bose (an erstwhile co-revolutionary) and the Chinese leader Dr. Sun Yatsen told him to defer any activity for Indian independence till such time as Japan was ready to take over the active leadership of the pan-Asian movement. We have no idea about Naren's attitude, if he had any, to the pan-Asian movement while he was a young man in Calcutta, but he rejected it now.[43]

The distaste for Japanese leadership lasted a lifetime. One of the reasons for his dislike might have been that the Japanese police trailed him, at the instance of the British, in spite of Japan being

neutral. Police surveillance may also have subsequently made him unresponsive to the USA.[44] The second reason was that neither Dr. Sun Yat-sen nor Rashbehari Bose appreciated the urgency with which he was seized and were putting off action to a later date. There was also a third reason. On his voyage across the Pacific, Naren found the Japanese behaving like members of a superior race. Yet the same Japanese, on approaching Honolulu, discarded their national costume and were most correctly clad in European suits. Naren had an Indian companion in the ship, a Miss Gray, a Tamil orphan brought up by American missionaries, who made caustic remarks about this "apishness of the Japs". Miss Gray must have echoed his own thoughts for him to have remembered this when he wrote his *Memoirs* nearly 35 years later. Naren also remembered that Miss Gray was "enthralled" by his "cosmopolitanism".[45] That was the first time anybody praised him for cosmopolitanism. Miss Gray's remark contained the germ of an idea which later became one motivating factor in Roy's life.

On 15 June 1916 Naren Bhattacharya, under the pseudonym Rev. Charles Martin, landed in San Francisco and a day later joined Dhangopal Mukherjee at Palo Alto, the locale of Stanford University, where Dhangopal was probably a graduate student. The host was a younger brother of a close revolutionary colleague, Jadugopal Mukherjee, and had come to America via Japan in 1908 at the age of sixteen. Stanford was the place where Hardayal had lived and established contacts with the Anarchists. Dhangopal was also under their influence for a while.[46] He was still in his twenties but had attracted attention as a poet and writer of children's books. Dhangopal was well thought of at Stanford, and Naren made several important contacts. One of these was the pacifist Chancellor of the University, Dr. David Starr Jordan, and the other a 'young and attractive' graduate student, Evelyn Trent, possibly a contemporary of Dhangopal at Stanford. A third was Arthur Upham Pope, who taught philosophy at the University of California at Berkeley. He was introduced to these new friends as Manabendra Nath Roy the new name he adopted.

The adoption of a new name was probably prearranged when

he left India and was to be a signal for his revolutionary colleagues to know that he had safely arrived in USA. His new name, Manabendra Nath, was synonymous to Narendra Nath. The adopted surname was significant. It was not a caste name as was 'Bhattacharya' though many Brahmins used it. 'Roy' was symbolic of a break with orthodoxy, though at that time the significance might have been submerged under considerations of expediency—the need to cover up his trail as an exile. The change can be interpreted as a subconscious shift away from Hindu nationalism, for the Roys in India were those who had associated themselves with the Muslim state the British had supplanted.

Evelyn Trent, whom Roy met through Dhangopal, had entered Stanford in 1911 and graduated in English in 1915.[47] Though details about Evelyn are lacking, it would be a reasonable presumption that she had romantic ideas about Indians. Roy, tall, dark and handsome, filled this role, and for the following nine years there was a remarkable collaboration between the two apart from their being man and wife.

The ten months that Roy spent in America were extremely hurried and tense, and indeed became hysterical following his arrest and that of several others involved in the Indian freedom movement. Roy later admitted that his stay in America was too brief and hurried for him to react to that country and the impression we have is of his disinterestedness in America. Yet he may have been influenced by America in spite of himself.

By the time Roy reached San Francisco, the Socialist Party in America, founded in 1900 with about 10,000 members had swelled into a large organization. By 1912 the membership stood at over 100,000, the party had been able to secure the election of some 1200 members to public offices, and as many as 300 socialist periodicals were then in circulation. *The Appeal to Reason*, a weekly journal published in Kansas reached a circulation of 761, 747 by 1913.[48] Enthusiasm for socialism was high in the opening years of the World War I, specially among immigrants who were opposed to American participation in the war. This could not have escaped Roy's notice as his own freedom from harassment was largely

dependent upon USA staying out of the war. European socialists, on the other hand, had by and large taken sides and adopted patriotic stances.

Roy was not neutral; he counted upon German aid for liberating India, yet he expected the USA to treat him as neutral and not hamper his activities. But as in Japan, the American police took their cue from their British counterparts. In addition there were American restrictions on immigrants from Asia, which probably hurt Roy's feelings and affected his activities. In the circumstances it would have been quite in order if Roy had misinterpreted the questions raised by American radicals about Indian capitalists exploiting the Indian working class after Independence as a mere ruse to avoid involvement. That could have been the nationalist reaction, and was in fact the reaction of his senior, Lala Lajpat Rai, then in the USA to seek support from American liberals for the cause of Indian freedom. Yet those questions raised by the American radicals had set Roy thinking and studying:[49] the nationalist moorings were loosening.

Roy also found friends who were pacifists, as much opposed to war as to imperialism. One of them, Dr. David Starr Jordan (1851-1931), was prepared to look dispassionately at American interests in Mexico. For the first time Roy became acquainted with persons who were free of national obligation in their thought. It seems possible that Roy had landed in America prepared to leave that country and find a refuge elsewhere, if needed. Dr. Jordan was prepared to make it easy for Roy to find a refuge in neighbouring Mexico, and gave him a letter of introduction to a personal but powerful friend, General Alvarado, a socialist, in Mexico. The revolution in that country was young, and in its initial stages had met with hostility and threats of intervention from the USA. Dr. Jordan's letter of introduction for an Indian, a fugitive from both British and American police, could not but have impressed young Roy.

Among American intellectuals there was considerable interest in and sympathy for India. At the University of California in Berkeley at that time there were several academics with an interest

in India. These included Charles Ricker, Arthur Ryder (who taught Sanskrit), Fritz Krueger (who taught Political Science) and Thomas Harrison Reed, besides Arthur Upham Pope. On the fringes of this academic circle were dancers Ruth St. Denis and Isadora Duncan and the writer Jack London. Ruth, in collaboration with Indian revolutionaries, performed a ballet in 1913 based on Kalidasa's epic love story, *Shakuntala.* Jack London made Hardayal the central figure in his novel, *The little Lady of the Big House* (1913) in which as 'Dayal Har', he is described as "a revolutionary, of sorts".[50]

Out of the records of the San Francisco trial (7 July 1917 to 28 April 1918) emerges the very interesting figure of Prof. Arthur Pope who taught philosophy at Berkeley and had met Hardayal in 1911. Since that meeting Pope had become an ardent advocate of India's freedom and maintained contact with Indian revolutionaries. During his stay at Palo Alto, Roy met Pope and they became friends. Later, after Roy's escape to Mexico, Pope remained his principal contact in the USA. Pope was interrogated during the San Francisco trial. He was pressured to resign his Berkeley post and later his teaching job at Amherst College. Subsequently he lost job in the War Department too because of his connection with Roy, which however continued possibly till Roy left Mexico for Moscow.

In a memorandum on Professor Pope, the US Attorney for Northern California District, a Mr Preston, wrote on April 2, 1918:

> ...Even more sinister is Professor Pope's acquaintance with another Hindu revolutionary, Narendra Nath Bhattacharya. Narendra, a man steeped in crime, is one of the most violent revolutionaries India has produced. He was entrusted with the arrangements for the reception of the *Maverick*... He came to San Francisco in the middle of 1916 under the false name of Martin...He stayed for sometime on the Pacific Coast, intriguing with German agents and Hindu conspirators both in San Francisco and Los Angeles. He afterwards went to New York, and was to have gone in the [German submarine] *Deutschland* to Germany to obtain sanction for a big deal in arms with a South China party. The scheme fell through, and

when the Federal authorities took action against conspirators in New York, Roy fled to Mexico under the name of Manuel Mendez...altogether he is the most dangerous Indian still at large on the American subcontinent. There is no reason why Mr. Pope should have anything to do with this personage.[51]

Poverty, bad relations with fellow Indian revolutionaries and being constantly shadowed by British and American agents were not conducive for a happy stay in New York. Roy had to move constantly from one place to another. Roy and Evelyn had also to frequently stay apart because a brother of Evelyn, who lived in New York and was opposed to Evelyn's marrying a Hindu revolutionary, made things difficult for them. In such a situation, Roy stayed for some time at the residence of Lala Lajpat Rai. The Lala recorded in his diary:

> In the meantime came M.N. Roy. He was represented to me as a revolutionary who had fled to take refuge in the U.S. But what interested me most was that during his stay in California he had fallen in love with an American girl who reciprocated his sentiment and asked to marry him. Her people would not listen to the proposal and the girl had consequently left the protection to follow Roy and share his fate. The girl happened to be a graduate of Leland Stanford University and had a brother in New York employed in some business firm. The Hindu boys in New York including Chakraborty were disposed to consider M.N. Roy as a traitor to the cause in so far as he had fallen in love with the girl and consequently impaired his usefulness to the country. Some of them denounced him and Chakravarty insulted the girl when she one day went to his place to make enquiries about her lover. The minute the story was broken to me I expressed my sympathy with Roy and his girl. I opened my rooms to them and we began to exchange views. Roy was in dire need and I gave him in all 350 dollars out of which 50 were earned by Mrs. Roy in doing some work for me.[52]

However, by mid-February the American government was gearing up to join the war against Germany and Roy's movements

became increasingly difficult until he was arrested on 7 March 1917.[53] Agnes Smedley, who was also arrested and interrogated in the Hindu-German conspiracy case and knew Roy in New York, in her autobiographical novel, *The Daughter of Earth*, describes an Indian revolutionary, "very dark, thin, tall and handsome, and very poor". She notes that "British spies were following all Indians. Someone had entered his room while he was away the day before and had searched it."[54]

As soon as he obtained bail, Roy decided to escape to Mexico, where the revolution was young and anti-American feeling high. The escape was not to evade the charge but because he knew he would be taken to San Franscisco in connection with the conspiracy case there and would most likely be deported to India for trial and imprisonment.[55] He obtained a letter of introduction from Dr. David Jordan addressed to the Mexican socialist, General Alvarado.

Before he left USA, Roy had "accepted socialism, except its materialist philosophy", and had written a thesis on pacifism. The thesis was that "colonialism being the cause of war, liberation of the subject peoples was the condition for durable peace". He rewrote the essay while in New York after his meetings and discussions with the socialists. The rewritten essay analysed the economic causes of war, which his socialist friends approved. Shortly thereafter he escaped to Mexico, and the rewritten essay titled "An Open Letter to His Excellency Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States of America: The way to Durable Peace" was published on April 17, 1917[56] when he had already left the USA and crossed into the Mexican border town Laredo. It was later published in Spanish in Mexico under the title "*El Camina Para La Paz Duradera del Mundo.*" The Spanish version contained passages about the Monroe Doctrine, which made Mexico a virtual colony of the USA. This was probably intended to be an expression of gratitude to the country which had offered him refuge, but it also led to a broadening of Roy's vision. He realised that political independence by itself was not enough. At least it had not proved enough for Mexico.

Roy was welcome in Mexico because of Dr. Jordan's letter of introduction and because Mexico was in a mood to defy Britain.

Mexico's President Carranza, after the Benton case, had described Britain as the "bully of the world". Benton was an aggressive Briton, holding mining and other concessions, who had come in conflict with the Mexican government and had been shot dead by one of the followers of Pancho Villa. President Carranza was indebted to Villa for his elevation to the Presidency inspite of being a landowing aristocrat, and had resisted British attempts at bullying, including those routed through American diplomatic channels. There was also in Mexico a certain amount of romantic sympathy for India derived from the local population being wrongly called 'Indian', and from the influence of the Theosophist movement (started in New York in 1879) on a section of the Mexican intelligentsia. Roy was domiciled among them. For a time the internal politics of Mexico did not interest him. He did not even visit Yucatan, the province where General Alvarado was supposed to have carried out remarkable land reforms.

According to a U.S. Military Intelligence report, "Charles A. Martin, alias Mahendra Nath Roy [U.S. Intelligence reports often referred to him by this name], is one of the chief Indians who are trying to provide, with German help, a rebellion in India... His wife's name is Evelyn...who states that she was born in California, and that her family had cast her off for marrying an Indian... It is understood that Roy is wanted in San Fransisco [in connection with the Hindu-German conspiracy case]. They stayed a few days at Nuevo Laredo, and reached Mexico city on June 15, 1917. On September 5, they were living at Calle Corbada 33, and Dhirendra Nath Sen came to live with them."[64] Upon his arrival in Mexico, Roy was keen to make contact with the Mexican government. With the ostensible purpose of presenting his letter of introduction to General Alvarado, Roy succeeded in getting an interview with the Minister of Defence, who happened to be the son-in-law of President Carranza. He was relieved when the Defence Minister assured him that he was safe in Mexico and that he was "amongst friends". The very next day, Roy received an invitation from the editor of *El Pueblo* (The People), the official daily of the government. He requested Roy to contribute a series of articles about British rule in

India. One of the first things Roy did after reaching Mexico was to take lessons in Spanish and translate into Spanish the book, *The Way to Durable Peace,* that he wrote while in New York. In Mexico he added to it a longish chapter on the origin of the Monroe Doctrine and its development in practice during a period of nearly one hundred years. In that chapter Roy argued in defence of Mexico's necessity to put an end to North American tutelage. With that purpose Roy said that a Latin American League should be formed as an opposition to the Pan-American conference sponsored by the U.S.A. The idea appealed to President Carranza.[65]

Roy was more interested in discovering European civilization and relating himself to it. The instruments of discovery were various. German diplomats and tradesmen who wanted him to start an armed rebellion in India cultivated him.[57] Mexican intellectuals and journalists found him interesting. But the most vital contribution was made by American bohemians—writers, artists, cartoonists, pacifists, socialists and radicals—the community of slackers which took refuge in Mexico to escape conscription. The link between this community and Roy was his American wife, Evelyn. In autumn 1916 Roy had travelled with Evelyn to New York and visited Greenwich village. There he debated with the radicals and read various texts, which included works of Karl Marx. Now, in Mexico the influence of Lala Lajpat Rai and other Indians on Roy weakened. He did not have to live by Indian mores. The only English speakers were the American bohemians, and included the American wife of the German Consul. And through them he found his way into European civilization and culture. The introduction was at two levels—the rich and the bourgeois who preferred to be orderly and formal; and the bohemians who gave primacy to spontaneity. Roy tended later to look at these contacts as part of his evolution into a communist or socialist. His actual development, however, was into a liberated intellectual.

In his first phase of intellectual growth Roy outgrew his cultural nationalism. Since, unlike Gandhi, he had no pathological sense of wonder either in his own self or his breaking away from cultural nationalism, there was no bitter struggle as with the Mahatma,

whose vow not to touch wine, meat or women while abroad caused serious emotional problems. It was the external world which enlarged Roy's vision through sensory stimulants—food he had not tasted before, works of art and musical compositions he had not known in India, and the intellectual organisation of sensory impulses, as in understanding the difference between painting and photography.

The young American wife of the German Counsellor, Von Schoen, "took me under her protective wings" Roy recalled later. It was in Frau Von Schoen's salon that he met Maestro Cassas, the Rector of the University; the artist wife of a German merchant who did a portrait of Roy and gave Roy lessons on art; Pablo Casals, the great cellist and his singer wife who taught Roy how to appreciate music. Roy observed "Everyday I became painfully conscious of how uneducated and ignorant I had been".[58]

Like many other Indians, Roy brought his food taboos to America. He had remained a vegetarian and teetotaller, and ordered a beef steak only when he was told in a posh Mexican restaurant that native food could only be served from cans, for none of the guests took Mexican food.[59] He took longer to break the drink taboo, and did so only because of the persuasion of the bohemians.[60] Summing up the experience, Roy was to write later: "In Mexico, we built up a small cosmopolitan community of free human beings.[61]

Although in his *Memoirs*, Roy deliberately omitted any mention of Evelyn, it would be reasonable to give her the credit for having introduced Roy to the western style of living and the world of artists and writers. To induce Roy to accept artists and writers as they were was Evelyn's achievement. This may seem a minor achievement. In the Indian context it was major. Only one Indian had mixed with western writers and artists before Roy. That was Rabindranath Tagore, but not on his first visit to Europe. Only on the second, when he was already an established writer, did he make professional calls on colleagues. Moreover, Tagore's was social intercourse with aristocrats, who were also poets and painters, not bohemian carefree intermingling.

Even before he reached Mexico, American radicals and pacifists had been able to induce Roy to look at the War a little less subjectively than before. In New York he had begun to "think of revolution as an international social necessity" and not just as a means for India's liberation. However, Roy never truly responded to America, and curiously, while Roy talks about the role of American radicals in provoking him to look at Indian nationalism in a less complacent manner than he had been wont to, there are no radicals mentioned in his *Memoirs* except those whom he had met in Mexico. The saddest omissions are those of Eugene Victor Debs, the leader of American socialism between 1900 and 1917, and Arthur Upham Pope. Debs had been a candidate for the American Presidency in each election since 1900, and in 1916 polled about a million votes, or six percent of the total, a creditable performance. Debs was the editor of *Appeal to Reason* which Roy must have read as it opposed America's participation in the War. In 1917 he was jailed under the Espionage Act for ten years for a speech opposing America's joining the War. Deb's trial had been well known and often discussed in the American colony in Mexico. Besides, though Debs was resident in Kansas, he frequently visited New York. One can only conjecture about a meeting between Debs and Roy. Roy's later prejudices against the socialists might have been responsible for his silence about Debs in the *Memoirs*.

It can also be argued that the Brahmin in Roy rejected the bourgeois culture of the nineteenth century—the culture of the USA—and looked back to the intellectual aristocracy of eighteenth century Europe. But Roy's full acquaintance with eighteenth century European thought occurred only later when he met Borodin and August Thalheimer, particularly the latter.

The refuge in Mexico gave Roy time to think without the compulsion for immediate action under which he had lived during the previous thirteen years. It renewed contacts with the Germans but proved the impossibility of attempting any action in India; instead it opened the possibility of mobilization of Latin American states against the USA and strengthening the socialist movement in Mexico. None of these however, was as crucial to Roy's development as the meeting with Michael Borodin in the summer

of 1919.

Before meeting Borodin, Roy had begun to accept socialism but had reservations about materialism. He ascribed his acceptance of materialism to discussions with Borodin.[62] The truth however was that in conversations with Mexican academics and Germans he was discovering a new world—the world of paintings and music, an awareness of art, of the presence of a spiritual life other than rituals and devotion—and slowly the belief that India was spiritual and Europe materialistic was being eroded. Mexico was more Europeanised than India, and European culture which had seemed remote at home became more palpable. Discussions with Borodin helped him to appreciate the history of European culture and how it had evolved. That was the core of the materialism he imbibed while in Mexico. He was to build upon this subsequently. As Roy later wrote: "Mexico was the land of my rebirth. It is true that before coming there I had begun to feel dissatisfied with ideas and ideals of my earlier life. But it was during my stay in Mexico that the new vision became clear and the dissatisfaction with a sterile past was replaced by a conviction to guide me in a more promising future. It was more than a change of political ideas and revolutionary ideals, I acquired a new outlook on life; there was a revolution in my mind—a philosophical revolution which knew no finality".[63] The stay in Mexico meant being freed from vows made and commitments undertaken as a young man of seventeen. This freedom accrued slowly over more than two years, but the cumulative effect was great, and Roy felt that he was free and heir to the entire human heritage without being hampered by national loyalities or boundaries. Roy described his stay in Mexico as "having lived through a couple of centuries of cultural history." He was obviously implying thereby his rejection of the hesitations and limitations of nineteenth century Bengal.

In Mexico the Germans also renewed their contact with him. The day Roy called on the editor of *El Pueblo*, a German came to see him and gave him the message that the two Germans, whom he had met in Java, were now in Mexico and were eager to meet him. Roy met and recognized the two Germans: one was an army officer who was sent to Java to arrange for transport of arms to India, and the other, a high official in the colonial service. Roy was also

introducd to the host, Commander von Koenig of the famous German submarine *Deutschland.* From them Roy came to know that the Germans were never informed in New York about his intention to go to Germany. Roy was again offered financial assistance to buy arms from China which he had arranged through Sun Yat-sen, and he was attracted by the offer. Roy was then invited to a banquet at the German Legation where he was introduced to President Carranza. Carranza told Roy that he had been duly informed about Roy's mission to purchase arms in China and offered all necessary facilities for the journey. Carranza also assured him that in case he returned to Mexico, the Mexican government would support his plan for a Latin American Union.

Elaborate preparations were made for Roy's journey to China. He was provided with a semi-diplomatic Mexican passport and a letter of introduction to the Mexican Consul General in Yokohoma who would help him make the financial transactions through a Japanese bank. Roy decided to avoid travelling through the USA where a police officer from British India, G.C. Denham was assisting the prosecution in conducting the Hindu-German Conspiracy case,[66] and had made elaborate plans to kidnap Roy. Roy therefore decided to take a Japanese ship from some Mexican port that would avoid San Francisco which most ships touched. The most difficult part was to reach the Mexican port on the Pacific because there was no regular train service and the last portion passed through a mountainous country infested with bandits. Armed with Mauser pistols and provided with one bogey full of soldiers, Roy made the last lap in a two-bogey military convoy and reached the practically deserted port Manzanillo, where he learnt that ocean-going ships called at another port, Salina Cruz, 300 miles to the south. He went to Salina Cruz and after waiting there for several days, learned that the next ship would not reach the port for at least another month. At that point, Roy writes, "It suddenly dawned on me that I really did not want to go again on the wild-goose chase. Mexico called me back; there I had made new friends, found new interests and planned to begin a new political career...the way back to old adventures was practically closed.[67] Roy thus decided to

stay on and became more and more involved in Mexican politics.

In the early twentieth century there were no political parties in Mexico. Various groups centered round individuals, mostly military men, were struggling for power. The groups contending for power were named after their leaders. The active following in each case was composed of military men or leaders of armed insurgent groups. After the 1911 revolution, Madero, its leader, became president for a short while and was the only civilian to hold the post. Carranza was the only president who held power for a sufficiently long time, and in 1916 he convened a Constituent Assembly and framed a constitution for the country. Thereafter, a parliament was constituted which met regularly.

Left wing politics was amorphous and disorganised. There was however a small socialist party. Its leader was an elderly lawyer, Ignazio Santibanez, whose home was the party office. Roy met him soon after his return from Salina Cruz. Santibanez welcomed him and recalled his articles on India published serially in *El Pueblo*. The Socialist Party chairman was pleased with the articles because they depicted India realistically.[68] A few days later Roy received an invitation to attend a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Socialist Party, where he was introduced to the nine members of the committee who were all proletarian, except Santibanez and another who was a school teacher.

At this time, a large number of Americans—pacifists, anarcho-syndicalists and socialists of various shades—had escaped to Mexico to evade compulsory military service introduced soon after America joined the war. Left wing journalism, art and literature of America were fairly represented in the ranks of these refugees. Among them were Maurice Baker, poet and cartoonist; Irwin Greenwich, novelist (who subsequently came to be known as Mike Gold); Henry Glintenkamp, painter and cartoonist; and Carleton Beals, journalist (who later became famous as author of books on Mexico and Spain). The first three had been regular contributors to the radical art and literary journal, *The Masses*, edited by Max Eastman. They all belonged to the Greenwich Village group, the bohemia of New York. Roy also met Charlie Philips who came to

be known as Manuel Gomez and was, along with Roy, later a delegate from Mexico to the Second Congress of the Communist International.

Philips brought the news that General Alvarado was planning to start a daily paper and was looking for an editor for its English section to enlist the support of the American colony in Mexico in his bid to become the next president of Mexico.[69] Alvarado's main opponent was General Obregon who had indicated his support for the Allies and America, and who later in 1920, headed an armed insurrection that overthrew Carranza. Alvarado, with Carranza's patronage, wanted to publish his newspaper to fight Obregon by denouncing militarism and pleading for a return to civil administration. Philips became the editor of the English section of the daily *El Heraldo de Mexico.* Roy later published his series of articles on the Monroe Doctrine in this paper.

About this time Roy met Don Manuel, the socialist president of the Chamber of Deputies, at the residence of the editor of *La Mujer Moderna*.[70] They took this opportunity to discuss the future of the Socialist Party of Mexico. Roy, at this meeting, suggested to Don Manuel the building up of the working class organisation and submitted an outline of a labour policy to the president for his consideration.[71]

The executive committee of the Socialist Party appointed Roy editor of its party organ, *La Lucha*, and director of party propaganda in preparation for a conference of socialists from Mexico and other Latin American countries. Roy was also authorized to invite fraternal delegates from these countries,[72] and the American radical community announced their eagerness to send fraternal delegates from USA. Don Manuel informed Roy that President Carranza "had been closely following [Roy's] activities to reorganise the Socialist Party, and was keenly interested in the result, particularly in the matter of fraternal delegates from the central and south American countries attending the conference". Roy was assured that he "could count upon the cooperation of Mexican diplomats and consular representatives in that respect".[73]

"Several hundred delegates" from different states of the Mexican

Republic and a number of socialist leaders from central and south American countries participated in the conference.[74] A demonstration led by Charlie Philips and Irwin Greenwich holding aloft a huge picture of Lenin (sent by John Reed) was one of the highlights of the event. The demonstration marched to the *Palaclo Nacional*, the seat of the government, where Charlie Philips addressed the gathering and demanded that president Carranza consolidate the revolutionary anti-imperialist front to protect the interests of the working class. Carranza appeared on the balcony, as pre-arranged, to greet the people and declare that the voice of the people being the voice of God, he would obey it.[75] The conference elected a new Executive Committee with Roy as the general secretary. A new constitution was adopted and the party came to be known as the Socialist Party of Mexico. It resolved to set up a committee to convene a regional international conference with the object of forming the Latin American League. Roy was also elected secretary of this convening committee. Besides Charlie Philips, another delegate who "stood head and shoulder above other delegates" was Plutarco Elias Calles[76] from Sonora.

Sonora had a common land frontier with the United States, and the geographical situation was favourable for the building up of an anti-Carranzist force with American aid. President Carranza was therefore keen to oust his rival, General Obregon, from that strategic position. Calles told Roy that he, as the "secret adviser of the President" should take up the matter with Carranza. Carranza agreed with Roy that a popular campaign for the election of state governors should be encouraged and added that Sonora was certainly ready for the establishment of a constitutional regime. The Federal Government, Carranza said, would order the election in Sonora and direct General Obregon to guarantee full freedom for the constitutional election campaign. The Socialist Party announced its decision to contest the election for Sonora's governorship and sent its General Secretary, Roy, to launch the election campaign. Roy travelled overland to Sonora in a military convoy. The federal government had advised him, for his personal safety, not to travel the shorter and better route which passed through the United States.

In the capital of Sonora, Harmoshila ("a glorified village" in Roy's words) a public meeting was held to announce the establishment of a branch of the Socialist Party and the candidature of Calles for the election of the governor of the state. While the campaign against him was being organised, General Obregon resigned from the governorship, and advised Carranza to appoint Calles in his place. The Socialist Party celebrated its first big victory. In recognition of his patriotic services Calles was shortly thereafter invited to join the federal government as Minister of Labour.

Roy writes in his *Memoirs* that in the first formal meeting Carranza had expressed his desire to appoint a labour minister and had asked Roy if a suitable candidate could be found among the socialists. "That evidently was a gesture meant to grant an official recognition to the nascent Socialist Party" and raise its status in the public life of the country. Roy thus not only established himself as the leader of the Socialist Party of Mexico but also as an important figure in Mexican politics; and in the process endeared himself to President Carranza. Roy later recalled: "My association with Carranza was an interesting experience...During the later days of my sojourn in Mexico, we met frequently".[77]

Around this time, Roy met the man who was to act as catalyst in Roy's decisive turn towards Marxism. Early in the summer of 1919, the Russian Bolshevik Borodin called at the office of the *El Heraldo de Mexico* to enquire how he could meet the "Hindu" General Secretary of the Socialist Party. Before leaving, the visitor, who announced himself as Mr. Brantwein, said, "Please don't worry, I am a friend coming from Russia. Deliver the message to Roy. I shall call again tomorrow".[78] Roy was excited at the prospect of meeting Borodin and getting first-hand information about the revolution in Russia.

Borodin had come to Mexico penniless. Stranded there, he was looking for friends and support. After the defeat of the Russian revolution in 1905, Borodin had gone to America and lived there as Mr. Gruzenberg. His wife and family still lived there. He returned to Russia in 1918 and was sent back to America to assist the Russian trade delegation for which he carried a good quantity of Czarist

jewels.[79] Immediately on arrival in New York, Borodin was spotted by the US Secret Service, and he escaped to Mexico. Borodin bought a few copies of *Gale's Magazine*. Going through them he found at least one article in every issue attacking M.N. Roy, who was described as the General Secretary of the Socialist Party of Mexico, and so he went to the office of the *El Heraldo* to find out.

Roy invited Borodin to his house when the latter confided to him the story of the missing jewels and confessed that he was virtually stranded in Mexico. He was expecting to hear from his wife about the jewels—his fellow passenger was to hand over the suitcase to her; besides he had left her with no money a year ago when he returned to Russia. The trade delegation was also stranded. Roy sent Mrs. Borodin five hundred dollars and the trade delegation five thousand as a first instalment through the Mexican diplomatic mission. Borodin also accepted Roy's invitation to be his guest and thus began a long friendship. Roy began to discuss the theory and practice of communism with Borodin. Roy wrote later: "It was the most memorable period of my life when the foundation of my subsequent intellectual development was laid. He [Borodin] initiated me in the intricacies of Hegelian dialectics as the key to Marxism. My lingering faith in the special genius of India faded as I learned from him the history of European culture".[80]

The news of Borodin's arrival in Mexico was kept out of the press, but members of the Socialist Party came to know and decided to convene a general meeting to meet the first Bolshevik emissary. Borodin was introduced to the executive of the Socialist Party at a closed-door meeting, where Roy explained that the object of his visit was "exploratory" and to inform the Mexican socialists of the foundation of the Third Communist International. It was decided at this meeting to convene a special conference of the Socialist Party and associated organisations to found the first communist party outside Russia. This conference (August-September 1919) decided to rename the Socialist Party as the Communist Party of Mexico[80] Both Roy and his wife Evelyn sat on the presidium of this conference. Lenin sent a special message to the conference which was read out by Borodin; and after the conference Lenin sent an invitation to Roy and the Mexican Communist Party to

sent a delegation to the second Congress of the Communist International.

Borodin was then presented to President Carranza at a special banquet. Borodin announced that "the new regime in Russia fully sympathised with the struggle of the Latin American people against imperialism and was eager to help it in every possible way. With that purpose a Latin American Bureau of the Communist International should be established in Mexico" if the President consented. Carranza requested Borodin to convey his good wishes to the head of the new regime in Russia thus according it with *de facto* recognition. Following the President's approval, the Mexican foreign ministry accorded to Borodin the facility to contact the West European Bureau of the Communist International through the Mexican Legation in Holland.

Before Roy left for Moscow in December 1919, he met Carranza to say good-bye. Carranza made special arrangements for Roy and Evelyn to travel with Mexican diplomatic passports as his special emissaries.[82] The Roys travelled as Roberts Alleno Villa Sarera. Carrenza asked Roy to see the Mexican Ambassador in Berlin, a man in whom he could confide, for resumption of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. Before parting, "the old man [Carranza] put his hand on my shoulder, and in a voice choked with suppressed emotion, said: 'You are still very young. Don't gamble with fate'... [Then he] turned on his heels abruptly and walked away".[83]

Roy's stay in Mexico was to be of great significance in his intellectual and political development. As he noted later, "My ideas of revolution and political activity changed during my stay in the United States of America. But the sojourn there was too short for me to put the new ideas into practice. In Mexico I got the chance. For the first time I came in contact with a mass revolutionary movement."[84]

NOTES (Chapter 1)

1. M.N. Roy, 'Disintegration of Priestly Family', *The Radical Humanist*, February 7, 1934.

2. Based on recording in his diary by M.N. Roy's father, Dinabandhu Bhattacharya, which was shown to me by Roy's younger brother Lalit Kumar Bhattacharya. The author regrets that in his book, *The Restless Brahmin: Early life of M.N. Roy* (1970) there was an error of one month in the computation of Roy's birth date on the English calender.
3. Harikumar Chakravarty — *Manabendranath Smarane* (In Remembrance of Manabendranath), Calcutta, 1956; pp.3-4.
4. My interview with Alok Chakravarty. See also Muzaffar Ahmad — *The Communist Party of India and its Formation Abroad*; National Book Agency, Calcutta, 1962, pp. 66-67.
5. Harikumar Chakravarty's article titled "*Biplabi Andolane Swamijir Prabhab*" (Swamiji's influence in Revolutionary Movement) in *Viswa-Vivek*, Vak Sahitya; Calcutta, 1966, p. 255.
6. *Ibid.* p. 255
7. Harikumar Chakravarty, *Op. Cit.* p.6. Saileswar Bose was also from Changripota. At the time of the planned insurrection in 1915, he opened a shop, Universal Emporium, at Balasore as the communication centre between Harikumar Chakravarty's, Harry and Sons, in Calcutta and Jatin Mukherjee's hideout at Mohandia, 22 miles from Balasore.
8. *Ibid.* p. 6.
9. Sir Charles Tegart *Terrorism in India* (Speech at the Royal Empire Society on 1 November 1932) p. 7.
10. See Harikumar Chakravarty's article in *Viswa-Vivek* quoted above.
11. See Appendix I in Samaren Roy's *The Restless Brahmin* for the text of Bhawani Mandir.
12. Surendranath Banerjee (1848-1925), came to be known as the "Father of Indian Nationalism" and is the author of the book, *A Nation in Making*, first published from Calcutta in 1925.
13. My interview with Kalicharan Ghosh, a young associate of M.N. Roy and the Changripota group, and author of *The Roll of Honour* and other books on the militant nationalist movement of Bengal, on 18 April 1968.
14. H. Chakravarty, *Viswa-Vivek*, p. 254.
15. Dr. Jadugopal Mukherjee in his preface to my book, *The Restless Brahmin: Early Life of M.N. Roy*, wrote that he met Naren (M.N. Roy) and Harikumar Chakravaıty at the Anushilan Samiti, where they both often lived, in 1905.
16. Nalini Kar, a close associate of Jatin Mukherjee, told me in course of interviews on 18 and 19 April 1968: "Satish Bose [Secretary of the Samiti]

introducing Narenda to me in 1906 said, 'Naren has just returned from Malda [a distance of about 250 miles from Calcutta] on foot, after doing some organisational work there."

17. My interview with Dr. Aswini Roy on 6 and 11 April 1968.

18. My interview with Sarat Chandra Ghosh. Ghosh believed that Naren used to write for the journals.

19. In the words of Nirvan Swami who quoted the text from memory. I have not been able to procure a copy of the journal, although several revolutionaries confirmed that such an article by Naren had in fact appeared in *Jugantar*.

20. M.N. Roy, 'Jatin Mukherjee', *Independent India*, 27 February 1949.

21. Interview with Aloke Chakravarty on several dates from 12 November 1967 to 2 January 1968. Among those who went to Ghedapahar was Kshudiram Bose, the first martyr of Bengal. Many years later, when Prime Minister Nehru refused to lay the foundation stone of the Kshudiram Memorial citing as reason his belief in non-violence, Roy was to deplore Nehru's stand. See Roy, 'Nationalism and Non-violence', *Radical Humanist*, 17 April 1949.

22. *Sandhya* was edited by Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya, *Jugantar* by Barin Ghosh's associates and *Bande Mataram* by Aurobindo Ghosh.

23. Bhupendra Kumar Dutta, a later leader of the Jugantar group, wrote to Aloke Chakravarty on 16 June 1963, "Naren Bhattacharya, Bhusan Mitra and Naren Bose of Atmonnati Samiti shot Nandalal Banerjee, the police agent, who was sent to arrest Kshudiram Bose". Roy later wrote, "I had the privilege of knowing Kshudiram. I met him and Prafulla [Chaki] on the eve of their pilgrimage... With pioneers like Kshudiram, nationalism was a religion... For them, patriotism was not the path to power. It was *tapasya*, a mystic experience of self abnegation. Kshudiram himself was the gentlest of souls... In a trance, a psychological state of the mystic *karmayogi*, he started on his fatal pilgrimage; the bomb on his box and the pistol in his pocket were not the means to destroy human life; they were as flowers with which the devotee goes to the temple to please and propitiate the god." (*Independent India*, April 17, 1949). Roy was provoked to write this article by the refusal of India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to unveil the statue of Kshudiram Bose at Muzaffarpur because, as Nehru said, Kshudiram believed in politics of violence and Nehru's own creed was non-violence.

24. History Sheet No. 687 of Narendra Nath Bhattacharji, Bengal File No. 324 of 1909 prepared by L.N. Bird, Special Assistant, Intelligence Branch, CID.

25. Naren was introduced to Amarendranath Chattopadhyaya by Jatin Mukherjee in 1908. For more details, see Amarendranath Chattopadhyaya's

commemorative article in *M.N. Roy: Philosopher—Revolutionary*, Renaissance Publishers, Calcutta, 1984.

26. Interview with Nirvan Swami (alias Satish Sarkar) on 21 and 22 January 1968 and other dates.

27. *Calcutta Weekly Notes*: *CWN*, Vol. XV, p. 596.

28. Prithwin Mukherjee's serialised biography of Jatin Mukherjee published in *Basumati* (Bengal Weekly); 9 September 1965 to 24 February 1966, p. 1245.

29. B.D. Mazumdar, *Militant Nationalism in India*, p. 167.

30. My interview with Satish Chakravarty, then leader of the Calcutta group of Jugantar whom Thibault communicated the information at the residence of Sir Asutosh Mukherjee, then Vice Chancellor of Calcutta University.

31. A photostat copy of this telegram is part of the micro-filmed record of the German Foreign Office, now available at the National Archives in New Delhi.

32. My interview with Amar Krishna Ghosh on April 13 and 14, 1968.

33. For further details on this part of Naren's life, see Samaren Roy, *The Restless Brahmin*: *Early life of M.N. Roy*, Allied Publishers, Calcutta, 1970, pp. 66-67.

34. After the failure of the *Maverick* to bring arms, Roy contacted a Chinese warlord through Sun Yat-sen to buy arms and send them through the North-Eastern frontier of India to the Bengali revolutionaries. A concrete agreement was concluded. The German Ambassador in Peking then told Roy that he could not pay such a huge sum — five million dollars — and Roy should get the necessary permission from Berlin. In order to go to Berlin to finalise the deal, Roy arrived in San Francisco via the Pacific enroute to Berlin. See Roy, *Memoirs*, Chapter I, captioned "In Search of Arms through Asia".

35. Roy, *Memoirs*, p. 64.

36. Emily Brown, *Har Dayal*: *Hindu Revolutionary and Rationalist*; University of Arizona Press, 1975, p. 94. See also K.K. Banerjee, *Indian Freedom Movement Revolutionaries in America*, Jijnasa, Calcutta, 1969, pp. 1-12.

37. Tilak Raj Sareen, *Indian Revolutionary Movement Abroad* (1905-1921), Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 1979, p. 124. Dr. Mansoor later testified as a prosecution witness to identify M.N. Roy during Roy's trial in India in the Kanpur jail in 1931. He was rewarded for this by being appointed a Professor of Aligarh University. See also M.N. Roy's *Memoirs* for further information about Dr. Mansoor.

38. Franz Bopp, the German Consul General in San Francisco was the principal accused in the Hindu-German Conspiracy case which was officially

mentioned as "USA versus Franz Bopp, German Consul General at the San Francisco and others"

39. William von Brincken, the Military Attaché at the German Consulate General in San Francisco, was co-accused with Bopp and was also sentenced to 2 years imprisonment. Brincken later wrote in San Francisco Bulletin on 6 October, 1920, about his dealings with Roy whom "he knew as Mr. Martin".

40. Starr-Hunt became a government witness at the San Francisco trial. His testimony enabled the government to unravel much of the mystery of the *Maverick. San Francisco Examiner*, January 31, 1918.

    M.N. Roy wrote in his *Memoirs*: "Evidently the clandestine activities of the German Propagandists and Indian revolutionaries associated with them were not unknown to the American Secret Service. Indeed, American Secret Service agents were in the conspiracy. I have reason to believe that Starr-Hunt was one of them". (pp. 23-26).

41. Roy, *Memoirs*, p. 35.

42. Interview with Pandit Laxman Sastri Joshi, a later associate of M.N. Roy in India, and editor of *Marathi Encyclopaedia.*

43. Roy, *Memoirs*, p. 5.

44. *Ibid*, p. 58.

45. *Ibid*, p. 20.

46. Jadugopal Mukherjee, *Biplabi Jibaner Smriti* (Memoirs of Revolutionary Life), Calcutta, 1956, p. 635.

47. Evelyn Trent was introduced to M.N. Roy by Mrs. Dhangopal Mukherjee, who was a niece of the Irish nationalist leader, De Valora, and a 'radical' herself. She refused to reside in a sorority of the University because "Blacks, Jews and Quakers were not allowed there", according to a letter from her son, Dhan Mukherji, to me, dated 13 December 1980.

48. Based on (a) Joseph G. Rayback, *A History of American Labor*, A free Press Paperback, 1966; pp. 230-281; (b) *Writings and Speeches of Eugene Debs*: Introduction by Arthur M. Schlesigger Jr; Hermitage Press, N.Y. 1948; pp. ix-xi; and (c) my interview with Late Prof. Stanley Plastrik of New York University, formerly one of the editors of *"Dissent"*

49. Roy *Memoirs*, p. 28.

50. Emily Brown, *Op. cit.* p. 94

51. U.S. Military Intelligence File, P. F. 5525, April 27, 1918. See also K.K. Banerjee, *Op. Cit.*, p. 34; and Samaren Roy, "M.N. Roy in America", *The Radical Humanist*, March 1983.

52. *Lala Lajpat Rai's Diary, 1914-17*, preserved in the National Archives, pp. 40-41.

53. *New York Times* report, quoted in K.K. Banerjee, *Op. Cit.*, p. 42.

54. Agnes Smedley, *The Daughter of Earth*; The Feminist Press, New York, 1973, pp. 257-58 and p. 274.

55. Roy, *Memoirs*, p. 64.

56. *Ibid*, p. 29. A report by Fred J. Weyand from Boston dated April 15, 1918 after his interrogation of Prof. Pope in connection with the Hindu German Conspiracy case states, "He [Pope] also had a copy of a manuscript mailed to him in mailing wrapper of B.W. Huebsch, Publishers, 225 Fifth Avenue, New York City... who retained another copy... Prof. Pope also stated that it was Prof. Jordan of Stanford University... who read the book, corrected the errors and also furnished the title to it." *U.S. Military Intelligence file*, P.F. 5525 M.I. 3e.

57. Roy, *Memoirs*, pp. 90-92

58. *Ibid*, p. 86.

59. *Ibid*, p. 57.

60. *Ibid*, p. 111.

61. *Ibid*, p. 165.

62. *Ibid*, p. 195.

63. *Ibid*, p. 217.

64. Letter of the military attaché at the U.S. Embassy in Mexico, No. 268, dated March 4, 1918, in reply to the Chief of Military Intelligence Branch, Executive Division, Washington D.C.

65. Roy, *Memoirs*, p. 125.

66. *Ibid*, p. 64.

67. *Ibid*, p. 103.

68. *Ibid*, p. 75.

69. *Ibid*, p. 111.

70. *Ibid*, p. 118. Even though Roy met the editor "frequently", he does not mention her name. In his Memoirs, he only says that this "young lady was editor of a monthly magazine—*La Mujor Moderna* (The Modern Woman), the first and only of its kind in Mexico... She had been private secretary to Carranza before he became the president of the Republic. In recognition of her services, the latter raised her to a public position" (pp. 69-70). It is possible that the lady was Elena Torres, who was also president of the Women's Club in Mexico.

According to a US Military Intelligence report, Evelyn Roy wrote her a letter from Petrograd in July 1920, "in which the Russian situation is drawn with enthusiastic colors. In this letter she says that Roy is writing to me but up to date I have received nothing and I tried to get Elena to give me the letter so that I may copy and send it in. The letter [to Elena] came by way of Estonia" Number 1777, Mexico city, Aug 8, 1920; 10058-0-3, p. 56: M.I. File No. 9771-B-41.

71. Roy, *Memoirs*, p. 119.

72. *Ibid*, p. 140.

73. *Ibid*, p. 140.

74. *Ibid*, p. 141.

75. *Ibid*, p. 144.

76. *Ibid*, p. 147. At the time Plutarco Elias Calles was a village school teacher in the northern state of Sonora. In 1925 Calles, as President of Mexico, visited Paris and met Roy and told him that he still possessed the membership card of the Mexican Socialist Party signed by Roy as General Secretary.

77. *Ibid*, p. 163.

78. *Ibid*, p. 178.

79. The story of the Czarist jewels appears in many books and Roy narrates it in his *Memoirs* (pp. 196-203) under the caption, "A Story of Tsarist Jewels"

79. *Ibid*, p. 195.

80. On the formation of the Mexican Communist Party, Karl M. Schmitt writes: "The orthodox Mexican Communist Party (Partido Communista Mexicana-PCM) founded in 1919, was among the first to be organized in Latin America following the successful Bolshevik Revolution... in the summer of 1919. As the various leftist groups talked of forming a new Socialist Party, Roy began to finance a small paper, *EI Socialista* run by Francisco Cervantes Lopez, leader of the Marxist Group (Groupo Marxista Rojo)... By the late summer of 1919 all the persons and elements were present in Mexico for the founding of a Communist Party... Under these circumstances the Mexican socialists held a Congress in Mexico city from August 25 to September 4, 1919, financed and greatly influenced by Roy. Almost immediately upon opening, a dispute arose over the seating of Louis Morones, to whom Gale objected... Roy, as Chairman, broke a tie vote and Morone was seated... Roy then gathered the extreme left socialists around himself and with Borodin's blessings formed the Mexican Communist Party". *Communism in Mexico*; Univesity of Texas Press, 1965; pp. 3-6.

81. Shortly after Roy left Mexico, a letter from the U.S. military attache in

Mexico (No. M.I. 4F/10541.938 dated February 19, 1920), to Mr. W.L. Hurley, Office of the Under Secretary, Department of State, Washington, D.C. said, "This office received information to the effect that Roy-Mahendra Nath (alias Narendra Bhattacharya, alias Mana Ben Roy alias Charles Martin, alias Manuel Mendez) who was one of the Indian Revolutionary Party of Bengal has recently left Vera Cruz, Mexico,. Shortly before his departure he had certain credentials signed, leaving the name blank, but explained this action by stating that the same were required for a comrade in Spain".

82. Roy, *Memoirs*, p. 218.

83. *Ibid*, p. 350.

2

The Moscow Years

To maintain the Indian people in their present condition of hopeless slavery is a vital necessity for the future existence of the English capitalist system; what the capitalists lose in their struggle with the British workers, they will more than recover by their ruthless exploitation of the hopeless and miserable Indian labourers. Consequently notwithstanding the fact that the English proletariat may gain something as a result of the war, he will never be able to overthrow his capitalist oppressors as long as the workers of India were their's to exploit at pleasure...

They [the British proletariat], and the rest of the world have still to learn that the struggle for Indian Independence is not a local affair, having for its end and purpose the creation of another egoistic nationalism; the liberty of the Indian people is a factor in world politics, for India is the keystone of British imperialism which constitutes the greatest and most powerful enemy of the Social and Economic Revolution that exists today.

Roy wrote this eleven months before he put forward his theses at the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920 in which he advanced the view that revolution in the agrarian colonies was a precondition for revolution in the industrialised countries.

In giving primacy to revolution in the colonies, Roy was denying the validity of a prognosis by Engels in 1882 that once the proletariat had won its victory in Europe and North America "the half-civilised countries will follow us of their own accord".

Soon after this article was published, a message from the secretariat of the Communist International was read out at the extraordinary conference of the Socialist Party of Mexico in 1919. "It was drafted by Borodin, in consultation with me," writes Roy. It outlined the communist policy of backing up the anti-imperialist struggle of the oppressed and subject peoples. "The Policy", writes Roy, "was elaborated in the theses on National and Colonial Question adopted by the Second Congress of the Communist International, a year later."[1]

On his way from Mexico to Moscow, Roy stopped in Berlin for four months. The duration of this prolonged halt might have been determined by the uncertainties of post-war travel and disturbed conditions in Russia. An almost equally important consideration was that during the war Berlin had been the operational headquarters of a group of Indian revolutionaries. The Berlin Committee, as the group was called, had arranged with the Kaiser's government for German arms for an insurrection in India. Roy met members of the Berlin Committee, but the meeting was disappointing. They were largely broken men, quarrelling among themselves, and were unable to discover a new line of action. They had been unable to utilise the conflict between the rival imperialist blocks and had lost the gamble for German aid. Roy argued in favour of an alliance with proletarian forces, which unlike imperialist blocs were not nationalist.

The situation called for a statement of Indian revolutionary aims in the new context. This Roy did before leaving Berlin for Moscow, and called it an *Indian Communist Manifesto*.[2] There were only three signatories—Roy himself, his wife Evelyn using her newly adopted pseudonym, Santi Devi, and Abani Mukherjee, who had just then arrived from India through the Dutch East Indies and Holland. Some of the Indians in Berlin probably refused to sign it. At least one of them, Bhupendranath Datta, whom Roy had known from his Calcutta days, has written that he refused to sign it. One

of the reasons he assigned for his refusal more than thirty years later was that he suspected that Roy "had promised the Bolsheviks that he would bring about a turn in the Indian revolutionary movement."[3] Roy did try to change the direction and character of the Indian revolutionary movement to which he had belonged in his early days. Datta did not agree with Roy in 1920. Probably other Indians in Berlin also did not agree, though later they were all to travel to Moscow to seek funds, and return disappointed. Two of them Nalini Gupta and G.A.K. Luhani, stayed back, and started working with Roy.

A British Indian Intelligence report describes the *Manifesto* as "an appeal to the British proletariat to join hands with the coming proletarian revolution in India against both the oppressive imperialism and the sentimental nationalism which would create a bourgeois democracy of Indian exploiters".[4] But the opening lines of the Manifesto itself were addressed to Indian revolutionaries who were told that the time had come for them "to make a statement of their principles in order to interest the European and American proletariat in the struggle of the Indian masses, which is rapidly becoming a fight for economic and social emancipation and abolition of class rule".

The *Manifesto* goes on to argue that :

- "The nationalist movement in India had failed to appeal to the masses, because it strives for a bourgeois democracy and cannot say how the masses will be benefited by independent national existence".
- "All that the world is allowed to know of the Indian revolutionary movement is the agitation for political autonomy. This has naturally failed to enlist the sympathy of the working class in any country, which must always be indifferent to purely nationalist aspirations".
- "The growing spirit of rebellion in the masses must be organized on the basis of class struggle in close cooperation with the world proletarian movements".
- "Because British domination deprives Indians of the

elementary right indispensable for the organisation of such a struggle, the revolutionary movement must emphasize in its programme the political liberation of the country".

- "The nationalist revolutionary movement, recruited from educated youths of the middle classes, tried to turn the discontent to an armed uprising against foreign rule. Since the beginning of the present century, terrorism, local insurrection, conspiracies and attempts to revolt have become more and more frequent... These activities did not inspire the masses with lasting enthusiasm; the leaders failed to prescribe remedies for the social and economic evils from which workers suffer". (Here Roy was giving his judgment of the movement with which he himself was associated as well as pointing out to his erstwhile comrades in the Berlin Committee that they should no longer stick to their old ideas).
- "The growth of class consciousness in the Indian proletariat was unknown to the outer world till last year, when one of the most powerful and best organised strikes in history was declared.... Though the nationalists used it as a weapon against political oppression, it was really the spontaneous rebellion of the proletariat against unbearable economic exploitation. As the workers of the cotton mills owned by native capitalists were the first to walk out it cannot be maintained that the strike was nothing more than a nationalist demonstration". (The reference is probably to the general textile strike in Bombay which started on January 9, 1919, and involved 125,000 workers).
- "The tremendous strength which imperialist capitalism derives from extensive colonial possession, rich in natural resources and cheap human labour, must no longer be ignored".
- "In order to destroy it completely world capitalism must be attacked simultaneously on every front. The British proletariat cannot march towards final victory unless he takes his comrades in the colonies along with him to fight

> the common enemy". Therefore, "We appeal to you to recognize the Indian revolutionary movement as a vital part of the world proletarian struggle against capitalism".

Roy was developing the ideas that he was to later present to the Second Congress of the Comintern. His association with German communists also helped. When Roy was in Berlin, he attended a secret meeting of the German Communist Party which lasted almost the whole night. The meeting decided to call a general political strike to be declared from dawn. Roy writes:

> For four days, the big city was dead, shops closed, factories idle, streets deserted in the day, everything enveloped in complete darkness in the night. On the fifth morning, from the same hotel window, I watched the mass of steel-helmeted soldiers marching in the opposite direction, in sullen silence. The might of organised labour had triumphed over brute force...It was a great luck to have that experience.[5]

Overall, Roy's stay in Berlin was a rewarding experience :

> Thalheimer was the first German communist leader I met soon after my arrival in Berlin... thereafter, we met frequently and I was invited to secret meetings of communist leaders discussing current problems of the revolution. I was immensely benefited by the experience, and before long could participate in the discussions. Thalheimer took great pains to give me English rendering of the discussions... He was the leader of the party, Paul Levi was still in prison, and Brandler away in Saxony... They all treated me with kindness, affection and respect.[6]

The Theses that Roy presented at the Second Congress contained his broader acquaintance and understanding of Marxism besides his own knowledge about its role in colonial countries. Understandably he was bitter with the Socialist International which he accused of failing to appreciate the importance of the colonial question. "Instead of giving moral and material help to the revolutionary movements in the colonies, the members of the Second International themselves became imperialists". Roy

however recognized that some of the ideas of the Socialist International were derived from those of Karl Marx and Engels. So in his draft theses he proclaimed the Third International as a "fighting body which has outgrown the realm of pure doctrinairism". This of course was changed in the adopted text, but it was the essence of his theses.

On various points Roy remained close to Marxist theory and only made new deductions. He argued that the imperialist countries had been able to avoid the crisis of capitalism by investing their surplus in the colonies, and could in the future pass on to the home proletariat a part of the surplus value earned there and sustain capitalism through profits in the colonies. Hence he argued that "*without the breaking up of the colonial empire, the overthrow of the capitalist system does not appear possible*". (Emphasis added).

Imperialist subjugation in the colonies had prevented a social and economic development corresponding to that of Europe and North America. (Roy was probably referring to the emergence of a progressive bourgeoisie in Europe which destroyed feudalism). Imperialism had retarded industrial development in the colonies, and the proletariat was consequently small and recent. The burden of population on land was heavy, and a large section of the peasantry was landless. The result of all these was that the spirit of revolt against subjection found expression only through the small educated middle class. Help to this class did not mean endorsement of the nationalist aspirations of the native bourgeoisie but to "open up the way to the smothered proletariat there". "People in the colonies need not go through the stage of bourgeois democracy", he argued, "though the revolution in the colonies was not going to be communist in the first stages". "But", he said, "if from the beginning the leadership of the revolution is in the hands of a communist vanguard, the revolutionary masses would not be led astray". It could prevent the rise of a native capitalism which in alliance with imperialist capital would make it easy for the transplantation of European capitalism for exploitation in Asia.

Roy's central argument in his debate with Lenin was that "the fate of European revolution depended on revolution in Asia; unless

the latter triumphed, the communist movement in Europe would simply count for nothing". Further, that "world capitalism" draws its main resources and income from the colonies, principally from those in Asia". In the first stages, the revolution in the colonies must be carried on with a radical agrarian programme like land re-distribution. "Since the establishment of British capitalism in India, the 80 per cent of the population which lives by agrarian work has lost its property and has been transformed into hired labour... These tens of millions of people have no interest whatsoever in bourgeois nationalist slogans: only one slogan "land to the tillers" can interest them".[7] In support of his theses at the Second Congress, Roy developed the theory of *non-capitalist path of development*. The idea existed in its germinal form in the works of Marx, but even more explicitly in that of Engels and Rosa Luxemburg. In 1894, shortly before his death, Engels had argued that countries which have just succumbed to capitalist production and which have conserved at least some rudiments of communal forms of property can appreciably shorten the process of their development towards socialist society. But these backward countries would require the support of the western proletariat. The idea was further developed by Rosa Luxemburg. In Lenin's view, a non-capitalist path of development could be followed only if the victorious proletariat of the Soviet Republics gave its support to the revolutionary movement in the backward countries. Discussing Roy's theses, Lenin said at the Congress:

> There was quite a lively debate on this question [of non-capitalist path of development] in the Commission, not only in connection with the theses I signed, but still more in connection with Comrade Roy's theses, which he will defend here...The question was posed as follows: are we to consider as correct the assertion that the capitalist stage of economic development is inevitable for backward nations now on the road to emancipation and among whom a certain advance towards progress is to be seen since the war? We replied in the negative. If the victorious proletariat conducts systematic propaganda among them, and the Soviet governments come

to their aid with all the means at their disposal in that event it will be mistaken to assume that the backward people must inevitably go through the capitalist stage of development.[8]

In the Commission, Roy and Lenin disagreed on the tactical question, viz. collaboration with the national bourgeoisie. The debate however ended in a compromise and modification of both Roy's and Lenin's Theses. While presenting the report of the Commission on the National and Colonial Question, which had adopted both Lenin's theses as well as Roy's supplementary theses, after their amendments, Lenin observed:

> "There has been a certain *rapprochement* between the bourgeoisie of the exploiting countries and that of the colonies, so that very often — perhaps in most cases — the bourgeoisie of the oppressed countries, while it does support the national movement, is in full accord with the imperialist bourgeoisie, i.e. joins forces with it against all revolutionary movements and revolutionary classes. This has been irrefutably proved in the Commission and we decided that the only correct attitude was to take this distinction into account and, in nearly all cases, substitute the term "national-revolutionary' for the term 'bourgeois-democratic'.[9]
>
> "The significance of this change is", Lenin told the Congress, "that we, as Communists, should and will support bourgeois liberation movements in the colonies only when they are genuinely revolutionary".

The lack of serious attention to Roy's theses and the continuing controversy probably resulted from the fact that Roy's original text, and not the one adopted by the Congress after modifications made in the Commission, was included in both the German and Russian editions of the proceedings of the Second Congress and the error was not detected until 1934.[10]

Roy's own logic was fairly clear:

> I did recommend formation of Communist parties on the ground that, as a guarantee against the danger of the nationalist bourgeoisie compromising with imperialism, the movement

for national liberation must be socially based on the worker and peasant masses. Lenin did not fully agree, although he allowed my opinion to be recorded and the IV World Congress fully accepted my view.[11]

In his *Memoirs*, Roy pays great tribute to Lenin for the latter's encouragement of a person most delegates at the Congress termed as "an Indian upstart". Roy writes:

> In our first discussion [before the Congress), he (Lenin) frankly admitted his ignorance of facts, but he took his stand on theoretical grounds...By quoting Pekhanov's authority, I shook his theoretical position.....he [then] suggested that I should draft an alternative theses...Lenin created a sensation by declaring that prolonged discussions with me had made him doubtful about his own theses... it was perhaps the most valuable experience of my life until then. I had the rare privilege of being treated as an equal by a great man who proved his greatness by doing so.

Two contemporary scholars, Helence Carrare d'Encaussee and Stuart R. Scharam, have discussed and analysed the debate on the national and colonial question at great length in their book, *Marxism and Asia*. They commented:

> Given the composition of the Second Congress of the Communist International, given too the inherent logic of Marxism, which may be regarded as an attempt to Europeanize the world, this controversy necessarily had to be decided in favour of Lenin. Roy was thus obliged to accept modifications in his theses into the much less sweeping claim that revolution in Asia was important but not that revolution in Asia was the key. (pp201-3).

Roy's assessment of the national bourgeoisie in Asia differed from Lenin's. After the 1911 Chinese revolution, Lenin was so enthusiastic about its leader, Dr. Sun Yat-sen, that he wrote; "In Asia there is still a bourgeoisie capable of standing for a sincere, energetic consistent democracy, a worthy comrade of the great leaders and great revolutionaries of the 18th century in France". Roy had met Sun Yat-sen five years later and was not greatly

impressed. He did not think that the bourgeoisie in any Asian country was sincere enough to usher in democracy.

The Second Congress debate has however continued to haunt the Russian imagination because between 1917, the year Lenin had effected the revolution in Russia and 1924, the year he died, Roy was the only person who had dared to challenge the theoretical formulations of that "great leader of revolution", and even worse, that revolutionary leader had partially accepted and amended his own theses. Even though the disagreement between Roy and Lenin was on an issue which has become largely irrelevant today, the Russians of the later generations seem unable to forget it. Nearly half a century after the Second Congress, the *Kommunist*, the ideological journal of the Russian Communist Party, printed a long article on the controversy in its fifth issue of 1968 where Roy had been accused by the new ideologues of the Russian Communist Party (CPSU) of being an ultra-leftist, an "infantile disorder" against which Lenin had warned. The point of the accusation was that Roy had sought deletion from Lenin's theses of the paragraph emphasizing the need for all communist parties to help the bourgeois democratic liberation movements . Lenin not only conceded this but also amended his theses meeting that objection from Roy. Lenin had been enthused by reform movements in Turkey and Persia as well as the Chinese revolution of 1911 when he was still young and impressionable. In each of these he saw limitations on (European) imperialism made by Asian nationalism. Since he had described imperialism as the highest form of capitalism he welcomed these limitations. Yet he had to render what was due to Marxism, and so he had imagined that at least in China the revolution was engaged in terminating feudalism.

Roy approached the colonial question—at that time often called the Eastern question—from a wholly Marxist point of view, entirely shedding the nationalism he had earlier subscribed to. His thesis rejected the Socialist International's gradualism that a revolution in a metropolitan country must precede, or be the usherer of a revolution in the colonies. On the other hand, since the colonies sustained capitalism in imperialist countries, only a revolution in

the colonies could enable the overthrow of capitalism in the metropolitan countries. It was not only a question of priority in sequence but of a cause and effect relationship.

Roy's experience of colonial nationalism was that it trimmed only the branches of feudalism but nourished its main trunk. National movements could succeed only if they adopted a revolutionary ideology, and for this he suggested a bourgeois democratic revolution accompanied by land reforms graduating to a fuller revolution under the leadership of a communist party. He cited the fact that the nationalist movements in the colonies had remained confined to a small educated middle class, and had by and large failed to assume the leadership of the masses, whom he considered objectively revolutionary.

If the revolution had to occur first in the colonies the Marxist apple cart was overturned. This was so new that the Congress could not really comprehend its significance. Lenin "frankly admitted" to Roy his ignorance of facts, but was reluctant to consider Gandhi as anything but "revolutionary". Roy contended that Gandhi as a religious and cultural revivalist was bound to be a "reactionary" socially and culturally, however revolutionary he might appear politically.[12]

Lenin contended that the colonial peoples distrusted even the proletariat of the metropolitan countries and laid the blame on 1914–19 social patriots for treachery in defending the right of their bourgeoisie to enslave the colonies and plunder the financially dependent countries. (He omitted admission of the fact that this tendency had appeared as early as 1870 and continued ever since). From this he argued that it was "the duty of the class conscious communist proletariat of all countries to be specially cautious and particularly attentive to the national feelings, in themselves out of date", in enslaved countries. The Communist International had the duty of supporting the revolutionary movement in colonies and backward countries only with the object of rallying the constituent elements of the future proletarian parties and educating them to fight against bourgeois-democratic trends in their own nation. All communist parties must support by action the revolutionary

liberation movements in the backward countries. The obligation refers in the first place to the active support of the workers in that country on which the backward nation is financially, or as a colony, dependent. Above all, efforts must be made to give the peasant movements in backward countries as revolutionary a character as possible, and thus establish as close a tie as possible between the west European communist proletariat and the revolutionary peasant movements in the east, in the colonies and the backward countries.[13]

M.N. Roy argued that the fountainhead from which European capitalism draws its main strength is no longer to be found in the industrial countries of Europe, but in their colonial possessions and dependencies. The capitalist structure of England would have collapsed under its own weight long ago but for the colonies which had enabled English imperialism to keep the British proletariat under the domination of the bourgeoisie. Therefore, without the breaking up of the colonial empire, the overthrow of the capitalistic system in Europe does not appear possible. To achieve this end, the Communist International must establish relations with forces in the colonies working for the overthrow of imperialism but such a relationship is not tantamount to upholding the doctrine of nationalism. The bourgeois democratic movements in the colonies are limited to the small middle class which do not reflect the aspirations of the masses without whose active support the national freedom of the colonies will never be attained. For the overthrow of imperialism— the first step towards revolution in the colonies— the cooperation of bourgeois nationalist elements may be useful but the Communist International must not find in them the media through which the revolutionary movement in the colonies could be helped. This is because the supposition that the people in the colonies are bound to go through the stage of bourgeois democracy is wrong. The revolution in the colonies is not going to be a communist revolution in the first stage. But if from the beginning the leadership of the revolution is in the hands of a communist vanguard the revolutionary masses would not be led astray. The struggle against imperialism will then necessarily also be class struggle. And to initiate class struggle in the colonies at an early

stage means to awaken the people to the danger of transplanted European capitalism which, overthrown in Europe, may seek refuge in Asia.[14]

Very few delegates could really understand the real import of Roy's theses. Also, except Sneevliet, who had been in central Asia and had organised a socialist party in Java and Safarov, no one had experience of the colonies. Sneevliet was in general agreement with Roy's thesis, but averred that the meaning of Lenin's and Roy's theses was identical. The differences lay solely in finding the correct relation between the nationalist and socialist revolutions in backward countries and in the colonies. Sneevliet also thought there was no question on the agenda of the Congress, as important for the future development of the world revolution, as the national and colonial question. He confirmed from his experience in Java that the situation in that colony "is altogether ripe for revolutionary propaganda". But he also remarked: "I have the impression that *with a few exceptions, this Congress of the Third International has not thoroughly grasped... the great importance of the eastern question*"[15] (emphasis added).

Sneevliet's impression was confirmed by the next speaker, Serrati, who wanted fraternal salutations to be sent to the colonial peoples accompanied by a declaration that "the proletariat has the right to take advantage of national insurrections in order to transform them finally into a social revolution... but it must not, above all in the backward countries, support the bourgeoisie"[16]

Tony Quelch, whose father Harry had supported Indian nationalist aspirations in 1906, stated that the rank and file English worker would consider it treachery to help enslaved peoples in their revolt against British rule. He recalled that parties of the Second International promised to behave in a revolutionary way, but did not help revolts in the colonies. He added that the attitude persisted among the "majority of the parties which have left the Second International and wish to join the Third International."[17]

In the following year at the Third Congress the colonial question did figure on the agenda but little attention was paid to it. The Eastern delegation were not given enough time to speak and at the

commission which examined the resolution, Roy protested before the plenary session of the Congress that "not a single representative of the European and American delegations was present". The commission therefore decided to adopt "no theoretical resolution" on the subject.

However, Roy was able to make an important contribution in the debate on the world economic situation at this Congress. The report on this question was placed by Trotsky on behalf of the Russian Communist Party. Roy sat on the presidium of this Congress.

The central thesis of the report was that world capitalism had survived the post-war crisis, the political conclusion of which was that the possibility of an early world revolution was no longer there. This was Lenin's view. Trotsky on the other hand hinted that he did not fully agree with Lenin's views. He suggested that if world capitalism had recovered its position, it could not have more than a temporary stability, and therefore the proletariat must be ready to pass on to the offensive at any moment and open a new chapter in the history of world revolution.

Before it was placed in the open session, Trotsky's report was discussed at a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) where Roy maintained that Trotsky's analysis of the position of British imperialism was not correct. Roy argued that the post-war economic crisis had reached its climax in 1921, but the absence of a strong communist party in Britain ruled out the expectation of a revolution. Trotsky was impressed by Roy's argument, which was a rare thing for Trotsky to do and asked Roy to see him for a private discussion. The discussion convinced Trotsky that the report should be amended in so far as Britain was concerned. "The result of Trotsky's discussion with me" Roy later wrote, "was his sensational book, *Whither Britain* published the following year". The thesis of the book was that Britain had to choose between two alternatives socialism or subordination to America.[18]

At the Fourth Congress (1922), Roy had to remind the assembly that the theses adopted at the Second Congress had laid down that

"the communist parties of the Western countries and in particular of the imperialist countries, should do all in their power to develop this liberation movement". He felt that the Communist International was not prepared to take the Eastern question seriously.[19]

The social character of the liberation movements was not uniform. In colonial countries where capitalism had developed, he argued, a weak native bourgeoisie was struggling against a powerful foreign bourgeoisie and therefore the native bourgeoisie does not direct its struggle against feudalism with which it maintains an alliance and from which it draws strength and support. A proletarian class was in the process of being created which in alliance with the landless peasantry could profitably intervene in the struggle between the two competing bourgeoisies. The existence of communist parties in the Eastern countries and their historical role became more significant from another standpoint, argued Roy. The bourgeoisie had come up in the colonies some 150 years too late to play the role of a liberator, and so "communist parties are necessary, even if for the moment they are merely cells".

At this Congress, Roy for the first time outlined what six years later was to be called the theory of decolonization. He argued that the dislocation of capitalist equilibrium in Europe was forcing imperialism to seek new markets by furthering the industrial development of countries such as India and China. "It may be objected that this is impossible, for the interest of imperialism lies in keeping the colonial countries in an economically backward state in order to sell them manufactured products... Yes, but this is a completely mechanical way of looking at things".[20] He was elaborating an idea which he had hinted at in his theses at the Second Congress, that of transplantation of European capitalism to Asia.

Roy reiterated his demand for the development of "our parties in these countries, in order to take charge of the leadership". Safarov, who followed Roy, was more outspoken. "In spite of the decisions of the Second Congress of the Communist International, the communist parties of the imperialist countries have done extraordinarily little to deal with the national and colonial questions". Safarov went on to cite instances of delinquency.[21]

At the Fifth Congress (1924), Roy asked whether the Communist International had succeeded in establishing a link with the national bourgeoisie in the colonial countries and himself answered the question in the negative. All that had been achieved was the "establishment of 'friendly diplomatic relations' between the Soviet government and nominally free countries." China was the most important among the 'nominally free'. Further, no relationship between the revolutionary proletariat of the Western capitalist countries and the popular movements of the Eastern countries had been established as indicated by the Second Congress. Roy was answering the people who had contended that the proletariat or the working masses had no monopoly over the right to self-determination. He conceded that point but argued that it was necessary to establish as to which class in the colonies had the "greater objective potential for waging the struggle all the way through to complete victory" of the national liberation movement. He contended that the Indian bourgeoisie had called off its 1920–22 movement when the revolutionary forces had become dangerous, and thereby allowed a further lease of life to British imperialism in India. Roy concluded by declaring: "Surely then, we cannot continue to insist on a formula which holds that the colonial bourgeoisie is an objectively revolutionary force which we would support and with which we should establish relations? This would be an utterly ridiculous stand to take..."[22]

But Manuilsky, with the weight of the Russian party behind him, accused Roy of nihilism for thinking that the proletariat and working classes could bring about self-determination to colonial countries.[23]

In fact, all through this period, in spite of Roy, the sentiment in the Comintern was that the colonial countries being undeveloped needed guardianship from the proletarian parties of the metropolitan countries. The guardianship idea prevailed, and by 1927 the conduct of communist activity in India was entrusted to the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB)—which was a group with negligible influence in its own country and none in India.

That for seven years Roy was allowed to direct communist

activities in India, without being resident in either India or Britain, was partly due to there being no outstanding Indian or British communist. Tony Quelch was a friend of Roy; Rathbone, a virtual disciple, ready to write with Roy the *Decline and Fall of the British Empire*, a book, if it had been completed, would have been a study in decolonization. That, however, was not to happen. Instead, Roy found himself devoting his energies to founding the emigré Communist Party of India.

Soon after the Second Congress, which raised his stature in the Communist International, Roy had been elected to the Mali Bureau and was also being considered as Soviet Ambassador to Kabul with an eye to revolution in India. The idea was mooted by Karakhan, then Deputy Foreign Commissioner and Roy's host in Moscow, and Borodin. "A new vision of carrying out the mission with which I had left India early in 1915 opened up" writes Roy. "Only I would return home not through the north-eastern, but the north-western gate." He recalled Lenin's declaration that "the Russian proletariat would sacrifice itself in order to promote the cause of world revolution. Otherwise what was the use of capturing power in one country."[24]

Immediately after he reached Moscow by the end of April 1920, Roy was introduced to the then Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Chicherin, by Karakhan. Chicherin told Roy at this very first meeting that "the revolution must spread eastwards; a second front of world revolution must be opened in Asia." Karakhan told him that to promote the struggle of the colonial people for national liberation, the Soviet government was prepared to help him in every possible manner. A great deal of preparatory work had already been done by the Soviet embassy in Kabul, he added.[25]

Around this time a number of stories also began to circulate about Bolshevik intervention in British India. Significantly, they coincided with a change in Lenin's tactics, and were designed to put pressure on the British government to negotiate a trade treaty with Moscow. Industrial plants and supplies were needed desperately to rebuild Russia's shattered economy. These could only be obtained from the West, which then largely meant a hostile

Britain. By stepping up pressure on British India, Lenin hoped to wring concessions from Britain without abandoning his dream of a Soviet India.

Hence, instead of sending Roy as Soviet Ambassador to Kabul, as suggested by Borodin, Lenin decided to send him to Tashkent as head of the Central Asiatic Bureau of the Comintern as well as the Indian Military School which was opened there to raise and train an Indian army of revolutionaries.

Shortly after the Second Congress of the Comintern, Roy's party left for Tashkent in two heavily armed trains. One, consisting of 27 coaches, contained an arsenal of rifles, revolvers, machine guns, light artillery, ammunition, stores and field equipment including wireless. It was escorted by two companies of Red Army troops, to prevent the train falling into wrong hands on the two thousand mile journey. The second, by which Roy travelled with Red Army instructors and other staff, which included Molotov, was loaded with gold coins and bullion, and ten wagons carried dismantled aeroplanes. Camouflaged machine guns were positioned on the roofs of the wagons. Seven other coaches were filled with military personnel.[26]

Lord Curzon, then Foreign Secretary of Great Britain, who, as Viceroy of India at the turn of the century was acquainted with Roy's antecedents in the revolutionary movement of Bengal and in the later abortive attempt at insurrection during the First World War, saw the implications. "The Russian in Central Asia" had also been the spectre which had haunted him. Before the year was out, the Soviet government received a blistering note from the British Foreign Office referring to the Indian Military School at Tashkent as evidence of Soviet aggressive designs against the British empire. The British however accepted the Soviet proposal of a trade treaty with Britain.

Lenin's tactics of wringing concessions from the British by exerting pressure on India began to bear fruit. In March 1921, a deal was struck between London and Moscow. The Anglo-Soviet Trade Agreement conceded to Russia, then still an outcast in the Western world, partial recognition by the biggest of the imperialist

powers. But, as a *quid pro quo*, Curzon demanded from Moscow a guarantee that all secret intrigues and harmful activities against British India should cease forthwith.[27]

The agreement also demanded and led to the closure of the Indian Military School. But in the meanwhile, Roy had been able to raise and train an Indian army of revolutionaries from among the Muslim volunteers (*muhajeerins*) who were going to Turkey to fight for the restoration of the Caliphate. Several of the *muhajeerins* even joined the emigré Communist Party of India which Roy founded at Tashkent soon after his arrival there on 17 October 1920.[28]

Following the closure of the Tashkent centre in April 1921, the Comintern founded the Communist University of the Toilers of the East in Moscow to train communists from the Eastern countries. Roy was appointed the Political Commissar of the University, while his wife, Evelyn, became a teacher.

Roy's emergence as the leading Asian member of the Comintern was largely because of his maturity as a communist thinker. There were others who had reached Russia before him, all men of some standing. Mahendra Pratap and Barkatullah had set up a provisional government of free India in Kabul in December 1915. Later, on 7 May 1919, Barkatullah was received by Lenin, though as a courier, not envoy, of King Amanullah. Mahendra Pratap also met Lenin the same year. Barkatullah and Pratap were accompanied by Abdur Rabb Barq and T. Prativadi Acharya. Even earlier, the Khairi brothers, sent by A.A. Joffe, Soviet Plenipotentiary in Germany, were received by Lenin. The Khairi brothers as well as Barkatullah were assigned to propagate among the Muslims within the Soviet Union. Virendranath Chattopadhyaya, Prativadi Acharya and Bhupendranath Datta also went to Moscow, though Datta went after Roy. After their meeting with Lenin, some Indian revolutionaries, including Acharya and Rabb, are known to have gone to Kabul where a large number of Indians had sought asylum. By the end of 1919, Rabb and Acharya formed the Indian Revolutionary Association (IRA). This was not to the liking of Mahendra Pratap and Barkatullah who were seeking recognition

for their provisional government of free India. The IRA was set up ten months before Roy's arrival and seemed to have enjoyed some patronage of the Soviet Embassy at Kabul. Coinciding with the setting up of the IRA, or because of it, Sovinterprop (Soviet International Propaganda) was opened at Tashkent and Baku. The first five Indians were joined by Mohamed Ali Sepassi and Shafiq, both of whom were associated with earlier missions to Czarist Russia sent by the provisional government of free India, but not allowed entry. In February 1920, Mohamed Ali Sepassi and Shafiq produced a new policy document for the Indian section of Sovinterprop at Tashkent. Abdul Majid (later convicted in the Meerut Conspiracy case) was also with them. About this time infighting broke out between the Indian section of Sovinterprop which backed Barkatullah, and Rabb's IRA. Sovinterprop made repeated attempts at conciliation and even announced a merger but the two groups remained separate. The IRA by then probably had 150 members. But in May 1920, Afghanistan revoked its grant of asylum to Indians. The bulk of Indian exiles in Kabul had therefore to seek refuge in Tashkent which they reached by July. Roy had reached Moscow by the end of April.

At the Second Congress of the Comintern, Roy, as the representative of the Mexican Communist Party, alone had voting power. Evelyn, his wife, also of the same party, had advisory status. Abani Mukherjee, as an individual, also enjoyed advisory status. Sovinterprop nominated Prativadi Acharya and Shafiq, the former with advisory status and the latter as an observer. Acharya was seen as representing the IRA while Shafiq had been closely associated with the provisional GOI. Thus all the three groups of Indians were accommodated at the Congress. However, only Roy attracted attention.[29] Other delegates took no notice of Acharya or Mukherjee. Alfred Rosmer (France) ascribed it to Roy's ideological maturity. Whereas Victor Serge thought it was because of Roy's physical attraction. Roy's disagreement with Lenin which led to a series of discussions between the two also attracted attention. Immediately after the Second Congress, on August 12, Roy (probably also Abani Mukherjee and Shafiq) went into a conference

with the British communists to find ways and means for building a communist party in India. In August Roy, Mukherjee and Shafiq formed the Indian Revolutionary Committee in Moscow.

Sovinterprop's patronage to the IRA (Rabb and Acharya) however continued. The first Congress of the Peoples of the East held at Baku in September had fourteen Indian delegates, half of them from the IRA. Roy was not enthusiastic about the Baku Congress and did not attend it, but Abani Mukherjee did.

Around October 1—after John Reed's funeral in Moscow which Roy attended before leaving for Tashkent—the Roys and Shafiq reached Tashkent from Moscow. The decision to form an emigré CPI, similar to the Russian Social Democratic Party in exile in London formed by Lenin in 1880, was taken on October 12 and the inaugural meeting was held on October 17. The Roys, the Mukherjees and Shafiq were the principal figures, but Acharya seems to have been accommodated in the Committee. Ten days later, the decision to co-opt Rabb was taken, presumably at Acharya's initiative. But Rabb was not happy with this decision. He was twelve years older than Roy and his exile was longer than Roy's by seven years. Even his second in seniority in the IRA hierarchy, Acharya, had been an exile for five more years than Roy. Besides, since Rabb was a Muslim and the majority of Indians in Tashkent were also Muslims, he felt that leadership was his by right. He had excluded Mahendra Pratap and Barkatullah from leadership and he felt that he could do the same with Roy. That might have been possible if Rabb's hardened opponents, Abdul Majid, Shafiq and Sepassi were not such active supporters of Roy.

Shaukat Usmani has documented the division of Indians in two camps, Roy's and Rabb's.[30] In December 1920, the emigré CPI expelled Rabb. G.I. Safarov tried to effect a conciliation and asked for the reinstatement of Rabb. The plea was turned down by Roy. In protest Acharya tendered his resignation. Roy was anxious to get rid of an incompatible personality like Rabb but not Acharya. He declined to accept Acharya's resignation. However, the following month the emigré CPI had to expel Acharya for his continued association with Rabb. Around this time, either before or after

Acharya's expulsion, all three—Roy, Acharya and Rabb—went to Moscow where Rabb appealed to the Executive Committee of the Communist International which appointed a special Commission to examine the issue. The Commission, composed of Karl Steinhardt, Konstatine Zetkin and Y.K. Peters ruled in favour of the Roy group because its programme was seen to correspond exactly with the directives of the Second Congress. In April 1921 the small bureau of the Comintern decided to stop work with the Indian immigrants in Tashkent and to transfer all Indians from there to Moscow for admission in the *Communist University of the Toilers of the East*. The closure of the Tashkent Military School (for Indian immigrants) was announced on April 27.

Meanwhile, another challenge to Roy's leadership was to arise before the Third Congress of the Comintern, which was to open in June 1921. Its Credentials Committee received an application from Virendranath Chattopadhyaya claiming to represent India at the Congress. Chatto, as he used to be called in intimate circles, and Acharya had left England terminating their studies to escape arrest. They took refuge in Paris where they became friendly with Mikhail Pavlovich, also an exile and a social democrat. Chattopadhyaya in his note to the Credentials Committee, said that he had joined the French Socialist Party and contributed to *L'Humanite*. Then he moved to Stockholm in 1917 where he and Acharya met Kirill Troyanowski. Both Pavlovich and Troyanowski were, in 1921, Comintern officials. Also, according to British Intelligence, Chattopadhyaya, while in Stockholm, had contacts with Litvinoff and Kamenev, who were now quite high in the Comintern hierarchy.

Roy was keen to have Chattopadhyaya along with Acharya in the emigré CPI. He wrote to Chattopadhyaya who came to Moscow in November 1922. Mukherjee and probably Evelyn came from Tashkent for the talks and it was agreed that the Berlin Committee of Indian Revolutionaries and the emigré CPI will have a conference the following summer. Accordingly Evelyn went to Berlin to meet the Berlin Committee members. Chattopadhyaya arrived in Moscow in late April or early 1920, accompanied by Agnes Smedley, then his wife, G.A.K. Luhani, Pandurang Khankoje, Bhupendranath

Datta, Nalini Gupta and some others. For the first time in his negotiations with other Indians in Russia, Roy had to contend with political arguments instead of personal ones. Chattopadhyaya, Khankoje and Luhani submitted a 14-page thesis on India and the world revolution and a memorandum, while Datta submitted a separate thesis of his own. Rabb supported the Berlin Group's thesis, which ruled out the very possibility of joining Roy's group. It pressed the Comintern to recognize it as an organised unit. The Comintern was prepared to deal with them as individuals and this was unacceptable to them. Some members of the group, however, subsequently accepted the individual status by staying on and joining Roy and the emigré CPI. Much later Datta joined the CPI front organisations in India. During its visit the Berlin group, in order to discredit the emigre CPI, accused Abani Mukherjee of being a British spy[31] and Evelyn Roy of being a British national and spy.[32]

Roy attended the Third Congress of the Comintern as the delegate of the Communist Party of India, which, lacking roots in India, enjoyed only consultative status. But, according to Rafiq Ahmed, Roy seems to have enjoyed an independent status himself.[33] Abani Mukherjee did not attend the Third Congress but Shaukat Usmani did. From then on there were no detractors of Roy till the attack on him by Kuusinen at the Sixth Congress in his absence. By 1 September 1921, Roy reported to the ECCI that there was a compact group of 30 Indian communists in Moscow.

The first group of eight Indians graduated from the Toilers of the East University on November 20 In 1921, with the permission of the Comintern, Roy sent Sepassi, Shafiq and Nalini Gupta to India to help the CPI acquire a base. Sepassi through Mota Singh formed the first communist group on Indian soil at Jalandhar around October 1921. Nalini Gupta left Moscow in August 1921, reached Calcutta sometime in November and travelled about in India for over two months contacting individuals in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, some of whom had already been receiving propaganda material from Roy by mail. These individuals were not aware of each other but were introduced to each other by Nalini Gupta. Shafiq

established a group at Lahore with Ghulam Hossain as leader, and thus three groups came into existence by March 1922.

Early in 1922, thirteen Indians, mostly members of the emigré CPI, set out on a long journey home across the Pamirs. They were all arrested and thrown into prison in the Peshawar-Moscow Communist Conspiracy cases in 1922–24. Later, others were jailed in the Kanpur and Meerut Conspiracy cases. In spite of these handicaps these Tashkent-Moscow boys returned home and dispersed over parts of the country. However, they were to face other kinds of problems while working in India. Those who became communists in Moscow and Tashkent had habits different from those communists recruited on Indian soil. A local leadership had grown up represented by Dange and Muzaffar Ahmad, Mirajkar and Ghate, which resented those who had been trained in Moscow. Also, the relations between some of the Tashkent representatives and the CPGB were not as desired, according to Shaukat Usmani.[34] But the schism did not come out in the open because of the police surveillance under which each communist functioned. But one recognizable result of such internal tension—between Tashkent and CPGB representatives—was that four members of the emigré CPI left India to attend the Sixth Congress of the Comintern without seeking party nomination.

These four were Mohammed Shafiq, first secretary of the emigré CPI, Habib Ahmed Nasim, Masood Ali Shah and Shaukat Usmani. Philip Spratt, then CPGB representative in India, is on record stating that Shaukat Usmani had gone to the Sixth Congress accompanied by three others without seeking party representation.

That the Tashkent component felt ill at ease among Indian communists who had never been out of India is borne out by the attitudes of Sepassi, Abdulla Safdar and others. The former stayed on in Paris till he was shot by the Nazis around 1940. Mohammed Shafiq seems to have wandered over Europe till the end of 1932 and then vanished. There was no news of Habib Ahmed Nasim and Masood Ali Shah after 1932 except for a letter from Raja Mahendra Pratap to Muzaffar Ahmad stating that Shah had been shot dead.[35] Abdulla Safdar returned to India only in 1933. Roy

was already in jail. Safdar did not find the atmosphere within the CPI—whatever was left outside prison after the Meerut trial—congenial. It was not cosmopolitan enough for him, so he joined the Royist group which had by then no status in the communist world. He was the only Tashkent-Moscow communist to remain loyal to Roy. Finally, sometime in 1940, he left for Moscow, apparently carrying a letter to Stalin from Roy. Nothing was heard of him after he had posted a letter to Roy from Jalalabad. Luhani, who had joined Roy in 1921, never returned to India. He worked in the Berlin and Paris foreign bureaus of the emigré CPI. Shaukat Usmani, another Tashkent-Moscow communist, also could not do anything of much consequence in India.

Indian politics must, then, have been a lonely battlefield for Roy: hardly any emigré communist with him, lack of support from Moscow, and a cosmopolitan communist background that distanced him from almost all others in Indian politics.

Roy's active role in Indian politics, however, came later. We need first to look at his activities in Moscow and his role as Comintern representative in China.

NOTES

1. Roy, *Memoirs*, p.221.
2. *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India*, ed. G. Adhikari, New Delhi; Vol. 1; 1917-1922, 1971, pp. 151-155.
3. Bhupendranath Datta—*Aprakasita Rajnaitik Itihas* (Unpublished Political History), p. 252, also quoted in *Documents*, *op. cit.*, p. 148.
4. *Documents*, *op. cit.*
5. Roy, *Memoirs*, p 270.
6. *Ibid*, p. 277.
7. Helene Carrere d'Encausee and Stuart R. Schram, *Marxism and Asia*, Penguin, 1969, pp. 150-151.
8. Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol III, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1957, p.459.
9. *Ibid*, pp. 457-8.

10. *Marxism and Asia, op. cit.*, p. 29.
11. M.N. Roy's Letter to Allen S. Whiting, author of *Soviet Policies in China, 1917-24*, dated March 11, 1951, in M.N. Roy Archives.
12. Roy, *Memoirs*, p. 380. On the Roy-Lenin debate and controversy see also, Franz Borkeneau, *World Communism*, A History of the Communist International, Ann Arbor, 1962, p. 292, E.H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution. 1917-23*, Vol.3, p. 257; Alfred Rosmer, *Moscow under Lenin*, Monthly Review Press, New York and London, 1971, p. 117, and *Marxism and Asia, op. cit.*, pp. 26-45, pp. 249-167, and pp. 187-203.
13. G A Adhikari (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 196-205.
14. *Ibid*, pp. 180-188.
15. *Marxism and Asia*, p. 164.
16. *Ibid,* pp. 165-67.
17. *Ibid*, p. 159.
18. Roy, *Memoirs*, pp. 512-14.
19. *Marxism and Asia*, p. 159.
20. *Ibid*, p. 192.
21. *Ibid*, p. 193.
22. *Ibid*, pp. 201-3.
23. *Ibid*, p. 203.
24. Roy,–*Memoirs*, p. 210.
25. *Ibid*, p. 321.
26. *Ibid*, pp. 421-22.
27. Peter Hopkirk, *Setting the East Ablaze,* Oxford, 1986, p. 137.
28. Adhikari (ed.), op. cit., p. 229.
29. My Interview with Charlie Shipman At Austin, Texas, USA, on 6-7 June 1986.
30. Shaukat Usmani, *Historic Trips of a Revolutionary: Sojourn in the Soviet Union*, Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 1977, p. 52 & p. 67.
31. Roy, *Memoirs*, p. 484.
32. See Muzaffar Ahmed, *Myself and the Communist Party of India*, National Book Agency, Calcutta, 1970, p. 487, about how the conspiracy against Evelyn was engineered by Indian revolutionaries.
33. See Muzaffar Ahmad, *The Communist Party of India and its formation abroad*, National Book Agency, Calcutta, 1962, pp. 28-29.
34. Usmani, *op. cit.*, p. 85.
35. Muzaffar Ahmad. *op. cit.*, 1970; p. 430.

3

The Comintern Years

Roy's colonial theses (adopted as supplementary to Lenin's) ran contrary to the main trend of Marxist thought which held that the proletarian revolution would occur first in the industrialised metropolitan countries which in their turn would liberate the colonies. This axiomatic Marxist thought was tenaciously held, even though there were passages in Marx's writings which indicated possibilities of agrarian countries transitioning to socialism by-passing capitalist development. The Russian revolution did not induce Marxists to revise their opinion. On the other hand, they failed to take advantage of the revolutionary situation which developed in China following the May 30 shooting in the industrial city of Shanghai in 1925. China was not an industrial country. It had a small proletariat whose influence was negligible compared to agrarian masses. Events in China during 1927 when Roy was the Comintern representative there, have to be viewed against the background of a sudden increase in communist influence in the Kuomintang and spontaneous revolt by workers and peasants. The leaders of the Chinese party were unable to grasp the significance of the directive they received from the Comintern executive's Seventh Plenum in November 1926. As Roy himself wrote later: "It appeared to them like a heresy"

In the Comintern itself there was inadequate appreciation of the fact of two sets of theses on the national and colonial questions

being adopted at its Second Congress in 1920. Few took them as alternatives for two kinds of colonial areas, which they were eventually to prove themselves to be. The tendency was to treat only Lenin's theses as operative and to ignore Roy's. The failure of attempts to carry the flag of revolution into the industrially advanced countries of Europe by 1924 recalled attention to Roy's contention that revolution would first take place in the colonies whence metropolitan capitalism drew its strength.

China was not directly ruled by any imperialist power, but the four powers (Britain, USA, France and Japan) in concert, controlled its custom duties and through the duties its trade. Each of them held territorial concessions in which they established industries and exploited cheap labour. Some of them owned railways and steamer companies. They had a hold on the financial and credit institutions.

The Chinese Communist Party had occasions to revise its opinion, but since the revisions had not occurred as a result of local thinking the party was unable by itself to formulate its policies according to the realities of the situation. This is borne out if we take a brief look at the history of the party. The party was formed in 1921 under the leadership of Chen Tu-hsiu, whose initial stand was that the communists in China should have nothing to do with the Kuomintang, the party of Chinese nationalism. He also argued that an alliance between the revolutionary proletariat and the national bourgeoisie was a deviation from the principles of communism. For Chen Tu-hsiu, then a professor of Social Sciences at the National University in Peking and one of the leaders of a westernising literary movement, the second Comintern Congress may as well not have been held. His views were distant from both Lenin's and Roy's, and closer to those of European communists like Serrati. Then Sneevliet, the Dutch communist who had experience of organising a socialist movement in Indonesia, went to China and argued with the communists that proletarian support to the national movement did not mean proletarian surrender to the capitalists. This appealed to Chen Tu-hsiu who took the lesson so seriously that throughout his chairmanship of the CPC, till August

1927, he would not permit a sharpening of the class struggle in the villages lest it weakened the nationalist front.

In 1923 the Kuomintang agreed to open its membership to individual communists following a negotiation between the Russian General Joffe and Dr. Sun Yat-sen. This helped the growth of the Communist Party of China which between 1924 and 1926 enlarged its membership from 800 to 54,000. It was able to organize seven million peasants in unions and two million workers in a Federation of Labour.[2] This rapid numerical expansion led to the belief that association with the Kuomintang was essential to the growth of the Communist Party. However, on the part of the Kuomintang the association was entirely dictated by opportunist considerations. The ups and downs of Sun Yat-sen's own career between 1911 and 1920 bore witness to the weakness of Chinese nationalism, for it could fight neither the imperialist powers nor the warlords. The nationalists hoped to use the communists for mobilizing workers, and thus to carry the nationalist movement beyond the confines of the westernized intelligentsia which had started it. Sun Yat-sen also wanted the westernization of China but without any structural changes in Chinese society, and so he and his followers, were looking for technicians of revolution who would not, however, alter the content of revolution.

The background and attitudes of major communist leader foreclosed the possibility of their leading a revolutionary movement at this early stage. Chou En-lai and Chu Teh had both been indoctrinated in Europe. They were modernists and nationalists, and only superficially communists. Mao Tse-tung had never gone out of China. His inspiration was also nationalist. At one point in his career Mao was close to Hua Han-min, one of the leaders of the right wing in the Kuomintang and a representative of the comprador bourgeoisie. Among the senior leaders only Liu Shao-chi was Moscow-oriented; the rest were all China-oriented and nationalist. Tsai Hosen also went to France but was less nationalist than his friend Mao or others with a background similar to his, such as Chou En-lai and Chu Teh. The policies of the CPC reflected these attitudes. In July 1923, Mao had declared that merchants were the

leaders of the national liberation.[3] A month earlier a manifesto issued by the Third Congress of the CPC had declared that the Kuomintang must be the central force in the national revolution and assume its leadership. The same Congress decided that the communists should relinquish to the Kuomingtang their control over the labour movement.[4] The Chinese communist leadership was not prepared to lead the masses in 1923. In 1926, on receiving the directive of the seventh Plenum of the ECCI, Chan Tu-hsiu telegraphed a protest to Moscow arguing that officers of the Nationalist Army hailed from the landowning class and would turn against the left Kuomintang government if a programme of agrarian reforms was taken up.[5] Objective conditions, however, were developing along different lines. Since 1919 there were mass protests throughout China on the question of the Allies (victorious in World War I) transferring to the Japanese the territorial concessions on Chinese land enjoyed formerly by the defeated power Germany. A tide of nationalism had swept China. There were strikes and demonstrations which had been put down by the Japanese and other imperialist powers. In January 1922 seamen at Hongkong struck work and won. A federation of trade unions was established. In October many workers in the Chihli coalfields were massacred. There was a strike followed by a massacre of workers on the British-owned Peking-Hankow railway, but the worker's movement had shown no sign of weakening.

Meanwhile Sun Yat-sen's government had established itself at Canton. General Joffe had met him and promised arms, and Sun Yat-sen realized that the workers' anti-imperialist struggle was stronger than the nationalists. So he let Borodin, who was sent by the Comintern in 1923 at his request, reorganize the Kuomintang and draft its new constitution, and sent Chiang Kai-shek to Moscow for military training. The Whampoa Military Academy, of which Chiang Kai-shek became the Commandant, was established to build up an army which could subdue warlords and give China territorial unity.[6] In October 1924 the Paper Tigers revolt of the pro-imperialist traders and compradors was suppressed.

Sun Yat-Sen died on 12 March, 1925. A struggle for succession followed, with Chiang Kai-shek and Wang Ching-wei ranging against each other. In May there was a strike in the Japanese cotton mills at Tsingtao, and on 23 May, the Kuomintang adopted a resolution for the unification of the country "through a revolutionary struggle" and not "through negotiations with reactionary cliques or opportunist alliances"[7]. On 30 May striking workers were massacred at Shanghai, probably in reaction to the victory of the left wing. On 19 August 1925 Liao Chung-hai, the Kuomintang Finance Minister who wanted to ameliorate the conditions of workers and peasants was assassinated. The head of the government, Hua Han-min, was suspected to have been involved in the assassination and had to be sent away to Moscow as ambassador.[8]

In October 1925 the second Hongkong strike took place and an army recruited from among the strikers was formed. It came to be called the Iron Army. Elections within the Kuomintang in January 1926 for its Central Executive resulted in a defeat of the extreme right led by Chiang Kai-shek which had been objecting to communist influence. The leftists, who favoured cooperation with the communists, scored a dramatic victory.[9] Their leader was Wang Ching-wei. On 20 March 1926 Chiang Kai-shek carried out his coup, and sent Wang Ching-wei into exile. To palliate the government of Canton, in July he undertook the Northern expedition to unite the country. The vanguard of this expedition was provided by the Iron Army. Communists and peasant leaders worked behind the enemy lines. The Northern Expedition was successful. The Iron Army reached Yangtse and in December 1926 it occupied the British concession at Hankow. The left Kuomintang government shifted its headquarters from Canton in the south to Wuhan—a joint name for Hankow and the two adjacent cities of Woochang and Kiukong, in central China. By February 1927 there was a demand for the return of Wang Ching-wei. In March 1927 Chiang occupied Shanghai and Nanking. The Wuhan Government dismissed Chiang. Wang Ching-wei returned and through a second Northern expedition, the Iron Army reached Chengohow, further towards Peking.

The situation had been revolutionary for about two years, and when the Comintern Executive's Seventh Plenum met in Moscow in November 1926 the need was felt for action on a definite programme, and to abandon the policy of *ad hoc* decisions by which the Communist Party of China had so far acted.

In the meanwhile, the objective of world revolution had received a set back. Disappointment in Europe following the failure of the German revolution led Stalin to proclaim in 1924 that the preservation of socialism in the solitary state where a proletarian party was in power was the principal Comintern objective. Stalin was asking for a change in policy—in fact he was questioning one of the basic postulates of Marxism as understood till then that the revolution had to be global or fail. The Comintern shifted its attention to colonial and semi-colonial countries, the most important among which was China. But the colonial experience in some cases was disappointing too. Collaboration with the national organisation in Indonesia, the *Sarekat Islam*, had been unsuccessful. The nationalists viewed the communists with suspicion and had expelled them.

In China however, the nationalist organisation had been built through communist mobilization and though communists had gained by association with the Kuomintang they had reached a position where they could think of branching out on their own. The advance of the Iron Army and the peasant mobilization accompanying the Northern expedition had clearly demonstrated that the Communist Party of China could and should make a bid for leadership or forfeit what it had already gained. In fact counter-revolution had made its first moves through Chiang's coup, and if the communists tarried, the Kuomintang would take the offensive.

Since 1922, Roy had been a persistent critic of the manner in which the Comintern was guiding the CPC. As long as his 1920 theses held a supplementary and therefore a subsidiary position, he was not heard with sufficient attention. At the Seventh Plenum he was allowed a hand in drafting the Comintern Executive resolution which went as a directive to the Chinese Communist Party. Earlier, in 1925, Roy had in fact wanted to return to India

and made a request to that effect to Stalin.[10] The return to India involved risking imprisonment, whereas in China the situation was safer. Soviet Russia had diplomatic relations with two Chinese regimes—one in the north and the other in the south. Besides, competition among rival imperialist powers rendered China a safer country to operate in. Also, within the Comintern a struggle was on in which Stalin was seeking to consolidate his power. He needed to subdue Trotsky who advocated the policy of world revolution. Attempts at revolution in Germany had failed, and Trotsky was under attack. Roy and Bukharin had sided with Stalin and went up in the Comintern hierarchy. Roy reached the zenith of his Comintern career in 1926,[11] and in December of that year was asked to go to China to implement the Comintern's programme.

When Roy reached China, the Kuomintang was all but split but none would admit the fact. There were two capitals One was Wuhan where the leftists, who had secured a majority the previous year functioned, looking to the returned Wang Ching–wei for providing them with a national figure and to T'ang Shen-chih for armed protection. The other was Nanchang (Nanking) where Chiang Kai-shek ruled. The communists were closer to the left Kuomintang but had shelved the agrarian programme though the peasant organisation which had helped the northern expedition had enlarged communist following many times.

Writing in a Russian Party organ, *Derevensky Kommunist*, on 9 May 1927, when Roy was already in China, Stalin contended that Roy's theses had been adopted as a suplement to Lenin's "in order to single out from the backward colonial countries, which have no industrial proletariat, such countries as China and India".[12] Four days later, talking to students at Sun Yat-sen University (in Moscow), Stalin argued that in deciding the issue of the immediate formation of Soviets of workers' and peasants' deputies in China, "It was not Lenin's theses that must be borne in mind, but Roy's which were adopted by the same Second Congress of the Comintern, and which speak of the formation of workers' and peasants' Soviets in countries such as China and India".[13] Stalin made these two declarations while the Fifth Congress of the Chinese Communist

Party was in progress, and Roy was attending it as the Comintern's special representative. Stalin was clearly in favour of the proletariat assuming the hegemony in national movements in countries like China and India. On April 30, Roy told the CPC Congress that "the time has come when the proletariat must have the courage to demonstrate that it is willing and able to lead the revolution if the petty bourgeoisie proves incapable of doing so."[14]

The crucial question was of "courage". Addressing the seventh Plenum in Moscow, Roy had maintained that in the initial stages the Chinese revolution must primarily be an agrarian one, and the success of the Chinese fight against imperialism depended upon drawing the peasants, the overwhelming majority of the people, into the struggle under proletarian leadership.

However, the leading figures of the Chinese Communist Party, Roy later wrote in *Revolution and Counter Revolution in China*, were not prepared for revolutionary action. "They mostly came from the petit-bourgeois intellectuals and were closely connected with the Kuomintang politicians"[15] The Seventh Plenum resolution had already pointed out the formidable list of enemies of class struggle in China: foreign imperialism, Chinese militarism, survival of large land ownership, the rural gentry, the merchant-usurer capitalists, and partly even the upper kulak strata of the peasant polulation. There were too many enemies to contend with and the CPC leadership was afraid of taking on all of them. It relied heavily on militarism. Tan Ping-shan, later Minister of Agriculture in the Wuhan government and a communist, in his report to the seventh Plenum did not favour a withdrawal from the Kuomintang, but at the same time wanted the communists to solve the agrarian question. "The land owning class represents the base of Chinese militarism", he told the ECCI. "In order to put an end to the semi-feudal system of the militarists we must solve the agrarian question. Only then we shall be able to shatter the militarists' base". The wish was pious. The communists could not leave the Kuomintang, which was aiming at unification of the country, through the militarists. The theses of the Seventh Plenum reached Shanghai while Roy was still on the way to China. During the discussions in the Central

Committee before Roy's arrival, it became increasingly evident that some of the Chinese communists were troubled by the theses and were extremely hesistant about unleashing a large scale agrarian revolution. Even after the masses, through spontaneous action, had occupied Hankow and forced a British withdrawal, the Central Committee of the CPC had in its political report of 8 January 1927 declared that a reconciliation between Chiang Kai-shek and Wang Ching-wei was "the most important of all problems", and a slogan of 'Reduce the people's burdens' would be inappropriate while military action—the Northern expedition—was in progress. On January 26, the Central Committee asked the communists to allay the Kuomintang fear of the Chinese Communist Party, which they attributed to the success of the Northern expedition mainly fought by the Communist Iron Army.

Roy arrived in Canton on 12 February and on 27 February the Chinese Communist Party issued a warning, presumably inspired and written by Roy, that "under no circumstances can the military or other organs of the revolutionary state be permitted to act independently". On 9 March, Roy warned the party that the danger of the revolution being betrayed through compromises with militarism and imperialism was real. He criticized Chiang Kai-shek for delaying his entry into Shanghai, while workers were being massacred by the imperialists after they had struck to facilitate Chiang's victory. The Canton communists, however, refused to publish Roy's criticism, for fear that it might provoke Li Chi-shen, the local Cantonese militarist, into taking repressive measures.[16] By the middle of March, the third Plenum of the Kuomintang resolved that nothing should be published in the papers of the Communist Party that violated the principle of cooperation with the Kuomintang. Subservience of communists to the Kuomintang had predictable consequences: communists did not oppose Chiang's entry into Shanghai, and within seventeen days of the latter's arrival, communists were rounded up and their labour pickets disarmed.

The second Northern expedition. a symbol of unification of the country, then became the main issue in communist circles. Roy opposed it while Borodin favoured it. Borodin wanted postponment

of the agrarian revolution till Peking had been captured. Roy held that the agrarian revolution could not be delayed. Roy contended that the generals, "with the help of whom we must reach Peking would in all probability turn into new Chiang Kai-sheks". In his view the "Chinese revolution will either win as an agrarian revolution or it will not win at all".

When the Whampoa Military Academy had been set up, Chiang Kai-shek became its head with Chou En-lai as the political adviser. The Kuomintang and the communists were in alliance but both "were dependent upon a congeries of military men". The resentment that followed the May 30 shooting at workers at Shanghai created the impression of massive communist influence. In October 1925, the enlarged plenum of the CPC's central executive committee decided to "simultaneously build up a clandestine organisation" similar to what Roy had advocated for India but no such organization was built up. The process was probably deferred by the results of the elections to the second central executive committee of the Kuomintang in January 1926. The extreme right wingers, who since 1924 had been objecting to communist influence, were defeated. Leftists, who favoured cooperation with the communists, scored a dramatic victory.

Yet, the Kuomintang was not split. A kind of teunous unity, or rather the semblance of it, was maintained, through the proposal for a Northern expedition against the warlord government in Peking, that of Chang Tso-lin and Wu Pei-fu. The expedition was launched officially on July 9, 1926 but troops had been sent to Hunan as early as May, exposing Wuhan to threats from a local warlord.

Co-operation between Soviet Russia and the Kuomintang regime in the extreme south was not as easy as with Feng Yu-hsiang in the north-west whose territory adjoined Russia's. In February 1926 Borodin paid a visit to General Feng in Shensi. While Borodin was away from Canton, Chiang Kai-shek carried out his March 20 coup against his own government and its communist supporters and Russian advisers.

Meanwhile the northern warlord Wu P'ei-fu (close to the Japanese imperialists) began preparations for a drive southward

against the Kuomintang in Kwangtung to forestall the Northern expedition. Chiang Kai-shek hastily made up with Borodin but extracted a heavy price in the shape of restrictions on communist presence and activity within the Kuomintang. Borodin agreed because to him, "Russian aid to Kuomintang appeared equivalent to supporting the Chinese revolution".

Wang Ching-wei left for Paris on May 9, 1926 and his departure weakened the communists. So an enlarged plenum of the CPC executive in July (12–18, 1926), while recognizing Chiang Kai-shek's coup as an "anti-communist offensive" by the Kuomintang right wing, reiterated communist "participations directing the Kuomintang's work as pre-requisite to a victorious Chinese revolution". The plenum also decided to consolidate the Kuomintang left wing, but deferred till the Fifth Party Congress (scheduled for the Spring of 1927) the organisation of "a complete peasant political platform" and this in the face of a directive from the Comintern as early as 1923 "to strive for confiscation of land" and "to broaden the base of the anti-imperialist revolution."

The Fifth Congress of the CPC met in April 1927. The question of agrarian reform now came to a head. "The left Kuomintang government resisted any agrarian reform on the plea that as the national revolution was not yet complete, social revolution must wait, [while] in the provinces occupied by Chiang Kai-shek's army, violent suppression of the peasant movement had already begun. The Hankow Government was also moving in that direction. Should the communists still support it, or lead the agrarian revolution at the risk of breaking up the united front with the Kuomintang?"[17] This was the crucial question. Roy moved a resolution to the effect that the communists must lead the agrarian revolution. Borodin and Chen Tu-hsiu, chairman of the CPC, opposed it. Their thesis was that till the nationalist army reached Peking, peace must be maintained at all cost in the territories occupied by the army. To support the demands of the peasantry meant precipitating a civil war, because officers of the nationalist army came from the landowning class. The resolution, moved by Roy, was however

passed by the executive only after he threatened to place it before the open session, where it was eventually ratified by a big majority, in spite of Chen Tu-hsiu's opposition and Borodin's manipulations, because most of the delegates came from the countryside and knew the mood of the peasantry.[18] In Moscow, Trotsky denounced Chen Tu-hsiu's policy of continued collaboration with the right Kuomintang. "The Chinese Communist Party placed the need for alliance (with KMT) above that of the revolution, especially agrarian revolution", he contended.[19]

Mao Tse-tung, who did not attend the fifth Congress, later came to a Politburo meeting sometime in May, where the rural delegates were in a minority and asked for the resolution to be kept in abeyance. "We must not develop social revolution in the villages and weaken the rear of the nationalist army" was the burden of his speech, and he left without allowing any discussion."[20] That was the end of hopes raised by developments in 1925 and 1926. Roy's theses failed to achieve results because it was never given a trial, and every action taken in its pursuit was sabotaged.

Warlords began rebelling against the Wuhan government within a week of the conclusion of the Fifth Congress of the CPC and the despatch of the second Northern Expedition. One of the generals allied with the Wuhan government, the commander of the Fourteenth Division, Hsia Tao-yin, revolted on May 18. Three days later, General Hsu K'e-hsiang, stationed in Changsha, staged a coup. Since the units of the Iron Army had been sent on the second Northern Expedition, no effective resistance could be offered. The rebel warlords transferred their allegiance from the left KMT to Chiang Kai-shek. By the end of May, there were almost daily reports of defections. The counter-attack on Changsha was called off. Borodin, his CPC supporters and the KMT leaders in Wuhan vigorously opposed arming the workers from the Hanyang arsenal. When on 18 May the news came that Hsia was less than twenty miles from Wuhan, Roy urged that the workers be armed, that the guns being manufactured in Wuhan's Hanyang arsenal be used to resist General Hsia. Borodin refused to arm the masses. "As he [Borodin] saw it", writes Dan Jacobs, "arming the mobs might

ultimately prevent the Sovetniki and the Chinese who had dedicated themselves to Borodin from getting out of China alive".[21] Besides, his wife Fanya was still in the prison of a northern warlord.

The situation in Changsha, however, was truly revolutionary. Tom Mann and Earl Browder, who had accompanied Roy as members of the Comintern delegation, visited Changsha in May and found it to have the "best organized" mass movement.[22] Another independent observer, Vincent Sheean had recalled, "Hankow, then, to sum up was marvellous revolutionary spectacle...You could not be in Hankow a week without being aware of all this. French Communists, German Communists, Hindoo Communists, British IIP people, and numerous agitators, responsible to the Comintern gave the place a fine mixed flavour of international revolt. The fact that many of these revolutionists preferred not to appear in public, and liked to conceal their comings and goings as much as possible, made the phenomena more significant. The beautiful carved oak head of Manabendra Nath Roy, head of the Far Eastern section of the Comintern, could be seen across a restaurant table in effective contrast to the dishevelled pate of Jacques Doriot".[23]

As defeat became imminent in Wuhan, Roy appealed to Stalin. He thought the revolution could only be saved if Wang could be assured of Comintern support. Roy believed that Wang stood ready to be rescued. In holding this belief he was probably influenced by Madame Sun. Wang Ching-wei, in fact, was the only major leader of the left Kuomintang government, who was trying to maintain friendly relations with the CPC and even attended the Fifth Congress and later the Politburo sessions of the CPC.

On June 1, Borodin and Roy received a secret radio message from Stalin, who assured the left Kuomintang government of Moscow's support. Stalin urged:

> without an agrarian revolution victory is impossible...We are decidedly in favour of the land actually being seized by the masses from below...You must not sever yourselves from the worker and peasant movement, but must assist it in every way. Otherwise, you will ruin the cause. Certainly old leaders of the Central Committee of the Kuomintang are afraid of

what is taking place. They are vacillating and compromising. A large number of new peasant and working class leaders from the ranks must be drawn into the Central Committee of the Kuomintang. Their bold voice will stiffen tthe backs of the old leaders or throw them into the discard. The present structure of the Kuomintang must be changed. The leadership of the Kuomintang must be freshened and reinforced by new leaders who have come to the fore in the agrarian revolution...It is necessary to liquidate the dependence upon unreliable generals. Mobilize about 20,000 communists and about 50,000 revolutionary workers and peasants from Hunan and Hupeh, form several new army corps, utilize the students of the school for commanders, and organize your own reliable army before it is too late...Organize a revolutionary tribunal headed by prominent non-Communist Kuomintangists. Punish officers who maintain contact with Chiang Kaishek...The scoundrels must be punished. If the kuomintangists do not learn to be revolutionary Jacobins, they will be lost both to the people and to the revolution.[24]

Chang Kuo-T'ao in the *Rise of the Chinese Communist Party* writes that when Stalin's message was read out to the Chinese Politburo no one knew whether to laugh or cry. They agreed that this "fairy tale from overseas" could not be carried out.[25] Roy however felt that Wang could be influenced to follow the mass revolutionary way if he could be assured that Moscow would back him up. He showed the telegram to Wang, besides Madame Sun and Eugene Chen. It is sometimes made out as if by doing this, Roy undermined the United Front. But, as Dan N. Jacobs puts it, "Roy had not upset Wang nearly so much as Stalin's message had...Now and later Roy would be blamed, by some, for having undermined the United Front.....That, of couse was absurd; the United Front was doomed long before Roy came along".[26]

Contrary to popular belief however Wang was not immediately affected by Stalin's telegram. He maintained his relations with the CPC and addressed the Fourth Congress of the All-China Labour Federation, which met in Wuhan from June 19 to 28, alongside

Chinese Communist leaders and Roy, and which adopted an "uncompromisingly radical program". The Northern Expedition's victories were unreal. The Iron Army which bore the brunt of the fighting was decimated. There was a daily streak of wounded reaching Hankow. By June 1, the number of wounded there was 9000. The warlords had done no fighting and had kept their armies intact, and were in a position to bully the Wuhan government and order it to do what they bade it to do.

There was no immediate reaction from the Wuhan government to Stalin's instructions. The government preferred to take orders from Feng, who ultimately ordered Wuhan to make peace with Nanking, and expel the Communists. In late June and early July the Wuhan Kuomingtang—inclusive of Wang Ching-wei—continued to search for an alternative to surrendering to Chiang Kai-shek. The Wuhan leaders now looked at General Feng as their new protector because the "Christan General" thought of Wang Ching-wei and Madame Sun as the most effective opposition to Chiang. Subsequently on June 20 and 21, Feng and Chiang had a conference at which an agreement was reached for the immediate ouster of the Russians and the CPC. On 28 June, the Wuhan government disarmed the Workers' General Picket Corps which had defended Wuhan against General Hsia's troops. After the disarming of the Workers' Picket Corps the CPC fleetingly considered armed actions; but Borodin, thinking now of his return to Moscow, directed laying down of arms.

The final rupture between the CPC and the Kuomintang took place on 15 July. Earlier on 12 July, T.V. Soong, brother-in-law of both Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek, returned to Wuhan from Shanghai having made his peace with Chiang. He held out hopes for a Kuomintang reunion plenum in August, at which time Chiang Kai-shek "might" resign, giving Wuhan an opportunity to determine China's future leadership. But, said Soong, the deal could be arranged only if Borodin and the CPC were physically expelled from Wuhan at once.[27] Here was hope for Wang Ching-wei. Borodin and his travelling companions left Wuhan between July 13 and 16. Immediately afterwards, General He-chien's men, on advice that

Borodin had gone, arrived at the deserted headquarters and opened fire. Martial law was declared. Borodin went to a hiding place called Lushan. Then he took up residence in Soong's house, and on July 23 his successor Besso Lominadze arrived in Wuhan from Moscow. On 27 July Borodin boarded a special train. He was seen off by Wang Ching-wei and T.V. Soong. Roy had nothing more to do. He too left Hankow on 8 August. After crossing the Gobi desert by car, he took the Trans-Siberian railway to Moscow.

After the counter-revolution, Madame Sun abandoned Hankow and fled to Shanghai, stating that the name of Dr. Sun could no longer be used to sanction a programme which suppressed workers, peasants and communists. It was no longer the Hunan generals who were loyal to the Kuomintang and to Wuhan; it was the Wuhan government that was loyal to the Hunan generals". At this juncture Madame Sun suggested that the civilian government of Wuhan lead the revolutionary forces south to Canton to entrench themselves in the historic base of revolution. This was what Roy too had suggested. On Roy's testimony in *Men I Met*, written two decades later, there was reference to only one meeting between him and Mao at the Politburo session at which Mao declared that outsiders did not understand China,[27] which was true to the extent that Roy did not quite assess the latent nationalism among communists in colonial countries, which he later experienced in India also. But the fact also remains that Mao was not prepared to accept Roy's leadership. Mao's opposition at the CPC's Fifth Congress to Roy's programme for an agrarian revolution might also have been influenced to a certain degee by his ambition to get the leadership of the CPC which meant eliminating Borodin, Roy and Chen Tu-hsiu. By August 1927 all the three were out of his way; the counter-revolution had driven Borodin and Roy out of China and Chen Tu-hsiu had been dropped from his prolonged chairmanship of the CPC.

Nine years later, Mao was to tell Edgar Snow: "Objectively, Roy had been a fool, Borodin a blunderer and Chen Tu-hsiu an unconscious traitor". He added: "After Chen, the man most responsible for the defeat was Borodin...Borodin had completely

reversed his position, favouring a radical land distribution in 1926, but strongly opposing it in 1927, without any logical support for his vacillations. Borodin stood just a little to the right of Chen Tu-hsiu and was ready to do everything to please the bourgeoisie, even to the extent of disarming of workers, which he finally ordered. Roy, the Indian delegate of the Comintern, stood to the left of both Chen and Borodin, but he only stood. He could talk...and he talked too much, without offering any method of realization".[28]

Much to Roy's bewilderment, however, the effective policies followed by Mao did not differ from those of either Borodin or Chen Tu-hsiu. While talking about India to Snow, Mao said the country could not be free "without an agrarian revolution."[29] Roy had taken an identical line regarding China. In the end, it can be said that "the truth of the matter seems to be that everyone—Trotsky not excluded—was a better prophet after the fact than beforehand. What the documents [*Kitasikaia revolutsia in Kommunisticheskii International*] do suggest is that Roy argued consistently for agrarian revolution and a substantially "different course"—upto the point, during the Fifth Congress, where revolution from above clashed head on with "revolution from below".[30]

At the seventh Plenum (November 30, 1926) Roy had maintained that the days of "classic imperialism" were over. In China he said the policy of imperialism was to find a possible *modus vivendi* with a section of the Chinese bourgeoisie. Therefore he argued that the big bourgeoisie could not be counted upon as participants in a united anti-imperialist front, for he expected them to side with the imperialists against the revolution. Great Britain, he contended, being unable to export capital was compelled to mobilize in India "inner capital resources" and encourage industrialization to postpone the collapse of the British capitalist system and with it the British empire. In India as well as in the Dominions, he argued, Great Britain could not hope to maintain political control in the face of declining export capital.

On his return from China where the bourgeoisie had struck against the communists, Roy was asked to draft a resolution on the perspective in India developing out of the diminishing export of

British capital. He saw in the process the inevitability of Britain allowing India to march from the state of dependency towards that of a dominion. In the draft resolution Roy wrote: "The Indian bourgeoisie, instead of being kept down as a potential rival, will be granted partnership in the economic development of the country under the hegemony of imperialism".[31] The new policy did not amount as much to a transplantation to India of European capitalism as the encouragement of native capitalism, in order to expand the Indian market for British goods. He also noted that both in supply of goods and capital, countries other than Britain were also finding openings in India.

This formulation of Roy's came to be called the decolonization theory and he was accused of being an apologist of British imperialism. His theory has been misinterpreted and ideological motives have been imputed to it where none exist. It is therefore important to see what exactly Roy had said.

The germ of the idea of decolonization was perhaps present with Roy as early as 1920, because the last paragraph of his original draft of the supplementary thesis at the Second Congress envisaged the possibility of European capitalism transplanted in Asia. Besides, there was a belief at the International that the 'masses' of India were incapable of 'proletarian' action. Roy had to labour against this reservation right through his comintern years. Sneevliet's testimony in 1920 of the existence of a proletariat in Java did not convince the International. Serrati voiced the feeling of many others when he warned against class collaboration in the backward countries, "for in those countries the proletariat does not yet have a firm class consciousness, and blindly follows its leaders".[32]

At the Fourth Congress (1922) Roy had warned the International against a simple division of the world between advanced and backward countries. He objected to all colonial countries being lumped together. He classified them in three categories. The first included India and China, countries "in which capitalism has reached a fairly high level of development. There, not only has the import of capital from the great capitalist countries resulted in the development of industry, but indigenous capitalism has come to

some maturity, thus favouring the appearance of a bourgeoisie endowed with well developed class consciousness, and of its counterpart a proletariat, which also develops its class consciousness and finds itself engaged in economic struggle which gradually pass over to the political".[33] In such countries, Roy argued, the bourgeoisie "finds it more advantageous to take the advantage of the protection of imperialism.....a compromise with imperialist domination becomes more acceptable to the indigenous bourgeoisie". He went on to say that European capitalism hoped to find new markets in these countries by furthering their industrialization. Concrete developments seemed to bear out his argument. Since 1916 a series of measures had conceded to a great extent the Indian nationalist demand for fiscal autonomy, including tariff protection for home industry. However, since fiscal autonomy necessarily implied political autonomy, the 1919 reforms had followed. Within four years of the reforms an Indian Tariff Board was set up for the first time. Roy did not think the Reforms had been forced by the Indian bourgeoisie's demands alone—other contributory factors were the exigencies of war, the necessity for widening the social basis of imperialism, the crisis of British imperialism caused by the war, competition from other manufacturing countries in the Indian market and the need to raise consumption levels in India so that it could buy more from Britain. This led Roy to argue in 1927 that India will be eventually granted dominion status and that the Indian bourgeosie will be granted partnership by the imperialist bourgeoisie for the joint exploitation of India.

This theory produced a storm. At the Comintern, members were horrified at the idea of any gradual change, because they associated reliance on gradual change with Bernstein's reformism. Roy was not advocating reliance on gradual change. On the contrary, he was arguing that since the bourgeoisie were entering into a compromise with imperialism, the Comintern could no longer ask the Communist Party of India to collaborate with the national bourgeois movement. The time had come for revolutionary action. As Roy was to put it later : "The march of India from a state of

dependency towards that of a Dominion is a fact. How long the march will last is a different question."[34]

At the Sixth Congress of the Communist International (1928), which M. N. Roy could not attend, he was accused by Kuusinen of having fathered a theory of "decolonization" which would gradually lead the Indian people to freedom. Soon after the Congress, and years later in an article, and then in a pamphlet, Roy denied having ever suggested that the process of industrialization automatically would bestow freedom on the country, or in any way diminish the need for revolutionary action or for a revolutionary party.

It may also be useful to see how the term decolonization came into being. As Roy pointed out : "the unfortunate term has a little history. While I was away in China (1927) a new comrade from India [Saumyen Tagore] came to Moscow. In his report he emphasized on the rapid development in India ... In summarising the debate on the report of the Indian delegate, Bukharin suggested that the Commission set up for examining the question should report on the process of such 'decolonisation' ".[35] On his return from China Roy drafted a resolution on the basis of the preparatory work accomplished by the Commission. The resolution was never adopted, probably as Roy says, because of waning of interest in the subject. Nor was it ever published and as such the controversy in regard to it continued on the basis of assumptions and presumptions. Roy concedes that Bukharin used the term decolonization "evidently" in a tentative and relative sense and not in the absolute sense alleged by its critics. The fact however remains that the use was Bukharin's. Yet when Bukharin as chairman of the Communist International opened the Sixth Congress debate on the draft programme of the International he made a personal disclaimer. "I do not share the viewpoint of those who claim that India had ceased to be a colonial country, and that we are witnessing a process of decolonization"[36]. The reason for Bukharin's volte-face could be that by 1928, Bukharin was on the defensive in his struggle against Stalin. At the Congress, "The Russians were clearly bent on making 'decolonization' an odious word. To do this, they ascribed to it a meaning which Roy certainly never intended,

namely, the voluntary cessation of imperialist exploitation"[37]. The Russians found a convenient ally in Shaukat Usmani, who attacked the British comrades, accusing them of 'open defence of imperialism'. The British delegation accepted the spurious Russian definition of decolonization and denounced it.

The only person to question the Russian interpretation of the term 'decolonization' was G. A. K. Luhani, an Indian close to Roy and associated with the Commission which drafted the resolution on the basis of Saumyn Tagore's report. He emphasized that "our use of the term was provisional; we always put the term within quotation marks. I repudiate entirely the interpretation Comrade Kuusinen has given". He also said the term 'decolonization' was included in "what I might call the terms of reference of the commision". During the several discussions held he could recall "no serious divergence of opinion inside the Commission". He described the discussion in the Congress as "one-sided", contending that the thesis had been presented to the Congress "not in its original but travestied form". He went on to register "energetic protest against this method of controversy as, to put it mildly, unfair both to the delegates of the Congress and those whose point of view is being criticised."[38]

In *Our Differences*, Roy referred to the resolution on the Indian question which he had drafted for the Sixth Congress of the Comintern and a subsequent communication he sent to the Comintern answering Kuusinen's accusations. The draft resolution contained the decolonization theory and the subsequent communication in its defence. Both documents remained unpublished till 1982 when Volume III-C of the *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India* appeared.

It is difficult to ascertain whether the suppression of the documents for such a long period was accidental or deliberate. In any case, it is unfair to Roy because until his death in 1954 he was accused by the CPI of being a "renegade" to the revolutionary cause and a believer in Britain conferring domimon status on India as a gift. The criticism continued even after India became a dominion in 1947, and later decided to be a Republic, but continuing the

membership of the Commonwealth which replaced the Empire. The details of Roy's draft, its critcism by Kuusinen and Roy's rejoinder are no longer of much interest and are not being quoted here. But the events of 1927, 1928 and 1929 are of great biographical value. While Roy was being attacked, a British statutory commission was considering the grant of further autonomy to the Indian bourgeoisie ahead of schedule, and on 31 October 1929 announced 'Dominion Status' as the "natural issue" of India's constitutional progress.

Meanwhile, the communist response to fascism was becoming the central question within the Comintern. German communist leaders like Heinrich Brandler and August Thalheimer advocated joining hands with the German Social democrats to defeat fascism. They were overruled by the Comintern which was vague about the threat the Nazis constituted and also regarded it as a necessary transient phase. The Sixth Congress frowned upon any collaboration with the Social Democrats, even against the Nazis. Roy expressed himself strongly in favour of such joint action, and the only option open to him was to be identified with what the Comintern branded as the Brandlerite Opposition. Together with the controversy over decolonization, this was to lead to Roy's expulsion from the Comintern.

In 1929 there were expulsions from all parties affiliated to the Comintern . Jay Lovestone and his group, which had ninety per cent of the contests in the American party elections in March, were expelled by the end of June. The Brandler group in Germany had been expelled a year earlier. In November 1929 Harry Pollitt and Rajani Palme Dutt replaced veterans like Tom Bell and Andrew Rothstein. Roy was expelled in September 1929 and this was announced in December. He returned to India in November 1930, staying in the meanwhile in Berlin under his assumed Mexican name Roberto alleny Villa Garcia, the same name which he had adopted to travel to Europe ten years earlier. His residence was the flat of Willi Minzenburg, the organizer of the League Against Imperialism. He engaged himself on writing *Revolution and Counter Revolution in China* (in German) which was published in

Germany soon after his departure in 1930, and 100,000 copies of which were sold within a year.

Most of the communists outside Russia who had been expelled or replaced in their offices were friends of Bukharin and constituted a kind of international communist opposition. Communist opposition groups had also been formed in France, Spain, Switzerland, Austria, Hungary, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Great Britain, India, USA, Canada and Mexico besides Germany. In March 1930 representatives of the Swedish Communist Party, the KPO of Germany, the communist opposition of Czechoslovakia and M. N. Roy met in Berlin and decided to set up an information centre. A bulletin titled *INKOPP* was published, with Roy and Thalheimer as editors, as the organ of the new centre. This opposition group withered away after Bukharin's arrest in 1937 in the Moscow trials. Roy continued to write for the journals of this opposition till 1937 in spite of being confined in an Indian jail for most of the 1931–37 period. He insisted, however, that the opposition should not convert itself into a rival international organization. In his letters from prison, he wrote to Ellen Gottschalk, that no new 'shop' should be set up — 'shop' being the code for organization. He did not want to emulate Trotsky, who after expulsion had formed the Fourth International.

Roy was arrested and imprisoned for five years (1931–36) upon his return to India. Travelling via Istanbul, Roy arrived in Karachi on 11 December 1930, with a forged passport in the name of one Banarjee. He reached Bombay on 17 December and assumed the name Dr. Mahud. After spending seven months in organising his group travelling extensively in UP, Bombay and other areas, evading British police, he was finally arrested on 21 July 1931, and taken to Cawnpore jail for trial as an accused in the 1924 Kanpur Conspiracy case. During these years, he wrote regulrly to Ellen Gottschalk, whom he married in 1937, after being released. He was permitted only one letter each month, and since censorship was very strict, a code was used. These letters provide a fascinating glimpse into Roy's thoughts during these years and record his responses and reactions to the major international developments.

June 10, 1933 : Roy expresses distress at Brandler's communist party and Thalheimer having been deserted by their associates in the German "I hope experience has taught them the correctness of my attitude - no new step but flood the Linie (official Communist Party) with new shareholders enlisted by us."

July 14, 1933 : "The idea of opening a new shop in these days of depression is not only foolish, but will be an unpardonable crime. Only the monumental egoism of the Lion [Trotsky] can think of such a thing at this moment. Indeed, in view of the situation I would go to the extent of liquidation of our own business (the communist party opposition, or the Brandlerite Opposition), had there been any change on the part of the Linie. In any case I would look out for any possible opportunity. Let it be clearly understood, nevertheless, that I have not changed my views in the least. But there are such things as emergency measures. This opinion of mine may be placed before the coming meeting of our Board" (CPO leadership).

August 19, 1933: By the time Roy wrote this letter Hitler had come to power and the CPO leaders had quit Germany and were flocking to Paris. "How are all the friends? The wandering Jews of the twentieth century."

September 22, 1933 : "Tell Heinz [Brandler] and August Thalheimer that I am very sorry not to be with them in these times of trouble. My position remains as determined as ever, although there is more than enough reason to shake it."

October 12, 1933: "Heinz's note was pathetic. The old chap sounds somewhat depressed, although he tried to put up a brave face, I suppose in consideration of my own position. But I wish them to understand that I consider mine [being in prison] in no way worse than theirs - indeed much better than that of those caught in the Dritte Reich" (Third Reich).

December 23, 1933 : "I still think that, had our people (CPO) been more elastic in the attitude towards him [Sneevliet], we could have won him over."

February 24, 1934: "I am eagerly looking out for the day when we shall celebrate a grand reunion, which let us pray will be all inclusive".

April 21, 1934: "I am fully in agreement with the projected move at the coming general meeting. I suggest that the question of emergency be emphasized." This refers to the CPO international conference writing to Moscow, seeking permission to attend the Seventh Comintern Congress more than a year thence in order to resolve differences through discussion for a reunion of all communist forces.

June 19, 1934 : In spite of his warm feelings for Sneevliet, this letter conveys Roy's disappointment at the Dutch comrade's enthusiasm over the launching of the Fourth International by Trotsky.

July 18, 1934 : "Did you see [Jacques] Doriot ? I am very curious about his future. Is there any danger of his going too far the other way ? I wish I was there. Cannot you represent me?" Doriot soon broke with the Communist Party and founded the *Parti Populaire Français*, which rapidly evolved into a fascist party. During World War II, Doriot went further, turned a violent pro-Nazi and fought for Germany on the Russian front.

August 23, 1934 : The Lion's *Vierte Reich* [Fourth International of Trotsky] does not seem to be flourishing."

September 20, 1934 : "I am very anxious for news of all the friends scattered over the world. I am very sorry to hear about the debacle of Doriot... I am not optimistic about the results of the General Meeting (the Seventh and last World Congress of the Communsist International). Yet one cannot but be curious, and deeply concerned. Old habit? Yes, The swing to the opposite is alarming. I expressed the apprehension in the 'Crisis' articles - in the one dealing with 'Leadership'. Please tell Heinz, August and others that I am always with them."

October 25, 1934 : "It was very kind of the Dutchman [Sneevliet] to place my case at the feet of his God [Trotsky] and cannot but appreciate the goodwill of the latter. It is more than what can be expected from the occupants of Olympia [Comintern leadership]. But the poor chap! What can he possibly do? Besides, with all his decency as a man he is also a God with clay feet. If he was only content to be a man, he would go down in history as a

really great man — something much bigger than a God."

November 23, 1934 : "I am distressed to hear that you have to move on again. Since you wrote there has been a new cabinet crisis (the Soviet leadership crisis resulting in purges). From the scanty news I cannot judge the situation... but anything may happen anytime. Therefore, in my opinion, the idea of your visit to the Fatherland should be seriously considered... I am very worried about the position of our friends (CPO) too. Could they not find a better place than Ireland? What about the North? [Scandinavia]. "

January 20, 1933 : "As regards Grisha [Zinoviev] and his kind, I cannot understand them. Why don't they realize the truth — that they are back numbers. The world does not need them any longer. How much pleasanter it would be for themselves to spend the rest of their lives in the justifiable satisfaction of what they have really contributed". Zinoviev was executed the following year.

April 24, 1935 : "Don't you see them [Thalheimer and Brandier] as often as ever ? I eagerly wait to hear about them... I am keenly concerned with their affairs also... It is unfortunate that the negotiations [with the Comintern for a reunion] should proceed so slowly. There is plenty of reason to hurry up matters."

September 22, 1935 : "I wonder if Heinz and August did go to the Exhibition [the Seventh Comintern Congress] and how they found it. As far as I can see it was an orgy of hero worship — and gods with clay feet at that. The Bandit [the Bulgarian Dimitrov, accused in Hitler's concocted case of burning down the German Parliament house, the Reichstag] raised to the high pedestal. He was appointed General Secretary of the Communist International] What an idea! I thought old Marx taught us that history was not made by great men! And here are his devotees not only including the cult of hero worship but actually manufacturing heroes for the purpose."

October 21, 1935 : "I also find the result of the last World Exhibition [Seventh Comintern Congress] satisfactory. Only, a lot of things were too flashy and superficial to command confidence. There was a lack of spontaneity, and absence of a robust assertion of the lessons of experience... Let us be gratified with whatever is

realized, and hope for more. No intellectual independence— that is the curse... I have been accused of 'intellectualism', but that is not as despicable as sycophancy."

November 20, 1933 : "I am anxious to have some news from the friends. Of course, nothing particular can be expected and generally I have patched up a fairly complete picture from bits of news picked up from the available newspapers and periodicals. It is not a very bad picture. There is reason to be satisfied, but not too optimistic. As regards the Bandit [Dimitrov], he merely acted as the gramophone, and shall speak a different language any time he is told to do so, the system is vicious... How does Willy [Munzenberg] speak to you so frankly? Don't worry as regards the future. We shall see."

January 21, 1936 : "You see, after all, I still remain a personal admirer of my ex-friend [Stalin], who used to pride over our racial affinity, and called me 'gold'. Now, he won't appreciate me even as copper! But I have the weakness of giving the devil his due. And in my account, his due is very considerable. I was publicly castigated for this weakness once at Weimar."

March 22, 1936 : "It seems that 'Western Stability' is going to be secured, but by throwing Russia to the wolves... something more than Abysinnia is to be looted. Can the Western powers and America sanction that loot, and save Western civilization? Nazi paganism and Japanese feudalism together will surely throw the achievements of the nineteenth century in to the flames of neo-barbarism; and Indian nationalism is ready with its 'spiritual message' to the world. The message is; endorsement of both the forms of crass materialism."

May 24, 1936 : "The gods [Comintern leaders] must be rather embarrassed by the unexpected victory [of the Communist Party in the French elections of May 1936, on a popular front programme]. Only, will they never realize whose victory it is? [the hint is to the CPO advocacy of joining hands with Socialists] Having won a victory, in spite of themselves, they may not be sure of what to do with it. Are we going to see Thorez [secretary of the French Communist Party] calling at the Elysee? [the French President's

residence]. That would finally destroy the legend of '23. (of the Communist in Germany refusing to share office with Socialists)."

"Thorez used to be a *brave garçon*. But I suppose he is throughly spoiled by now. Doriot seems to be going to the dogs. In an American periodical, I read some extracts from his speech in the Parliament in connexion with the ratification of the Franco-Soviet Pact. If the report was correct he made a nasty speech."

"It sounded like Sneevliet, — full of hatred and bitterness. Of course, Doriot has more than enough reason to be bitter. Others have too. But one must not lose balance. I am afraid he is losing it. That would be a great pity."

"I am very fond of him. He is one of the old friends I shall go a long way to meet again. Well, the currents and cross-currents of reality are beyond our power to control. but I cannot help holding the gods [Comintern leaders], particularly the minor ones, responsible for driving good men to despair."

August 24, 1936 : "The Spanish drama... is awfully exciting. But curiously enough the cabled news did not give the personal composition of the [French] *Front Populaire* Cabinet, except mentioning the inclusion of three women. I have read some alarming news about Doriot. Who is this 'dissident' Communist reported to have joined the Cabinet?"

September 24, 1936 : "I am rather confident about the final outcome of what is called the Spanish embroglio. But, of course, there always remains the danger of one of these international gunmen touching off the powder magazine on the pretext of the events in Spain. It is astounding how these chaps [Hitler and Mussolini] manage to scare the wits out of the democratic statesman, and get away swaggeringly with the loot."

"This Blumian [Leon Blum was the head of the French Popular Front Government] non-intervention in the Spanish affair is such an ineffective, though well-meant, effort to head off the nefarious plan of finding some plausible pretext. It would be wise policy, if it was enforced by all those professing it. But it is not."

"I read of some hitch between Blum and Thorez. I am always a bit uneasy about this bouncing boy [Blum]. Any weakening of the

Front Populaire at this juncture would be catastrophic. The Spanish disease, nutured from Italy and Germany, may then affect France. Will that create any better situation? I think not. Yet, on the other hand, Blum's back must be stiffened up."

"I read an astonishing bit of news about Jacques' [Doriot] new tendency. He is in the run for replacing De La Roque. It is incredible! Yet, who can say? That would mean personal blow for me. But one must be a superman not to be bitter at the treatment accorded to him. Even if he goes to the dogs, I shall always like him personally, and understand his feelings. That would, of course, not mean condoning his behaviour in the least."

October 21, 1936 (last letter from jail) : "I am terribly worried. How could the Blumians (Socialists) be such confounded fools! Don't they see that the noose is relentlessly closing on their own accursed necks, with the aid and connivance of 'democratic' powers, for the pleasure of whom they are selling their souls, and themselves assisting the rape of democracy? The French Republic is doomed, unless some miracle happens..."

"Doriot is a tragedy. Isn't he? ... With his popularity, he can become a real danger. But who is to blame - originally? Even now I believe that he was driven to act desperately. He is hardly an emotional muddle-head like many others. Much, too much, provocation was necessary to drive him to the enemy's camp."[39]

The Comintern ceased to be of much importance after 1935. The Moscow trials created panic. The CPO leaders sought asylum wherever they could obtain it. Most went first to France and then to Cuba. Thalheimer died in Cuba in 1948; Brandler who reached Cuba in December 1941 returned to Europe after the war ended. He was in England, where Ruth Fischer met him twice or thrice between 1947 and 1949. He died in 1967 presumbly in Germany.

Ruth Fischer came to India and met Roy and was in correspondence with him before his death in 1954. The reunion which Roy had hoped for while in jail never took place. Neither could he correspond with Brandler or Thaleimer. But he did write to Jay Lovestone, soon after coming out from jail, and discovered that they differed on Russian policy in Spain. Lovestone was critical

of Russia for not sending armed help to the Republicans; Roy thought that any armed help across Europe would have been not only unfruitful but might have involved Russia in a situation from which she would have found it difficult to extricate herself. From now on, Roy was to get increasingly involved in Indian affairs. He did make one last attempt at correspondence with Moscow, though. After a study camp in Dehra Dun in May 1940, Roy sent an emissary to Moscow. That was Abdulla Safdar, one of those who were in Tashkent in 1921 when Roy founded the Communist Party of India in exile. The contents of the message from Roy that Abdulla Safdar carried to the Comintern are not known. The last letter that Safdar wrote was from Jalalabad in Afghanistan after having gone across the Indo-Afghan frontier. No more was heard from Safdar but a youngster, Saxena, who had accompanied him came back to Delhi in the late 1950s with a Russian wife. He was on the verge of destitution and reported that both Safdar and he spent years in Siberia, separated from each other and under strict surveillance. Roy did not live to see Saxena's return. That Roy had started analysing the Indian situation seriously while in Berlin is seen in the fact that before he himself returned to India, he sent one of his close Indian associates in Germany,[40] Tayab Shaikh, and a few others with a manifesto. In that manifesto, dated July, 1930, which was addressed to the "Revolutionary Vanguard of the toiling masses of India" Roy criticised the new Comintern line and urged Indian communists to reject that line. One of the themes Roy stressed in the manifesto was the demand for a Constituent Assembly and gorging of a united national front to confront the common enemy, British imperialism.[41]

In this manifesto, "*Our Task in India*", Roy said "the battle of the Indian revolution will have to be fought and won in the villages... For the peasants, the national revolution means the agrarian revolution — the expropriation of the princes and the landlords". Solving the agrarian problem was to Roy "the essential condition for India's becoming an industrial country"—a theme that he reiterated in 1944 in the "*People's Plan for Post-war Economic Reconstruction of India*". Roy argued that industrial development

was dependent upon a sound agricultural base which would provide for the "development of the purchasing power of the masses." He frequently quoted Lenin on the necessity of gaining the support of the peasantry for the success of revolution in a pre-capitalistic society. In a letter to his associates in India, written from jail, Roy wrote "the appreciation of the revolutionary role of the peasantry in an industrially backward country is one of the basic conditions of Leninism".[42]

More fundamentally, however, Roy formulated his programme and tactics for India on the model of the French Jacobins. He felt that in India the revolution should be under the banner "not of Communism, but of Jacobinism". Hence, Roy sought to replace the radical line of the Sixth Comintern Congress for the creation of Soviets in India with the Jacobin slogan for a Constituent Assembly which he thought would appeal to a broader spectrum of political opinion. When he urged Congressmen to adopt the demand for the convening of a Constituent Assembly to draft the Constitution of Free India, he was in reality "aiming at the Jacobin Convention which represented the forces of petty bourgeois radicalism."[43]

Expounding his ideas, which he called "Twentieth Century Jacobinisın", Roy told his followers in India:

> If we wish to find a historical analog to the task set to ourselves, we should fix upon neither the Russian Revolution nor any other revolution of our time. We shall have to go further back and find our prototype in the Jacobins of the French Revolution... The Jacobins carried through the bourgeois revolution in the teeth of opposition of the bourgeoisie. The representatives of the bourgeoisie, who had heralded the revolution, went over to the camp of counter-revolution, and the Jacobins carried it through against the feudal aristocracy as well as the big bourgeoisie. The relation of classes in contemporary India is somewhat analogous. The Indian revolution is taking place in an entirely different period of history, when the relation of classes on the world scale completely changed, and the economic conditions and technological development, necessary for the reconstruction of the world as a Socialist society, have been created.

Therefore, once the revolution takes place in our time, though with a Jacobin ideology and with a Jacobinist programme, the tendency towards a direct development to Socialism, which was inherent in Jacobinism, will most probably prevail in our country.[44]

NOTES

1. Robert C. North and Xenia J. Eudin, *M. N. Roy's Mission to China*, University of California Press, 1963, p. 19.
2. M. N. Roy, *My Experiences in China*, Bombay, 1938, p. 20, even in January 1925 "by its own reckoning, it [the CPC] had only one thousand members" [Dan Jacobs, *Borodin : Stalin's Man in China*] Harvard, 1981, p. 147
3. Stuart Schram, *Mao Tse-tung*, Pelican, 1966, p. 74.
4. *Ibid*, p. 74.
5. M. N. Roy, *op. cit.*, p. 46.
6. North and Eudin, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-21.
7. M. N. Roy., *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in China*, Calcutta, 1946, p. 386.
8. Stuart Schram, *op. cit.*, p. 84; also, Dan Jacobs, *Borodin*, Harvard University Press, 1981, p. 184.
9. North and Eudin, *op. cit.*, p. 21; also, Dan Jacobs, *Borodin* : p. 190. In the new Central Executive Committee of the Kuomintang, 7 of the 36 members belonged to the CPC and 14 to the left KMT.
10. M. N. Roy on "Malenkov" in *Men I Met*, Lalvani Publishers, Bombay 1968; p. 91.
11. In February 1926 Roy was appointed to the editorial staff of the *Communist International*, the multi-language journal of the Comintern. At the time of the Sixth Plenum (Feb-March 1926) he was elected to the Presidium and named Chairman of the Eastern Commission and was also elected member of the ECCI Orgburo and the Secratariat. Following the Seventh Plenum (Nov-Dec. 1926) he was elected to the British and Agrarian Commission and a joint secretary of the Chinese Commission. Thus, by the end of 1926, Roy had attained membership on all four of the official policy-making bodies of the Comintern : the Presidium, the Political Secretariat, the ECCI and the World Congress.
12. Stalin, 'Concerning Questions of the Chinese Revolution', *Works IX*, p. 238; also quoted in North and Eudin, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

13. Stalin, *Works, IX*, 265-66. Emphasis in original.

14. The full text of Roy's speech at the Fifth Congress of the CPC has been carried in North and Eudin, op. cit., pp. 188-208, under the caption "The problems of the Chinese Revolution and the Role of the Proletariat." "For the first time", wrote Pavel Mif, who was present at the Congress "the Chinese Communist Party was given a truly Leninist prognosis of the events which were taking place... Roy gave the young Chinese Party the experience of world Bolshevism", quoted in Roy, "*Revolution and Counter-Revolution in China*", p. 538 note and in North and Eudin, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-79. (Mif was a worker in the Eastern Department of the Comintern. In the beginning of 1926 he was sent to China for organizing party schools. Later, in 1930, Mif became the representative of the Communist International in China. The quotation is from a book Mif wrote in 1932, three years after Roy had formally ceased to be a member of the Comintern).

15. M. N. Roy, *Revolution and Counter Revolution in China*, *op. cit.*, p. 550.

16. North and Eudin, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

17. M. N. Roy on "Mao Tse-tung" in *Men I Met*, op. cit., p. 126.

18. *Ibid*, p. 128; Dan Jacobs however writes : "Towards the end of the Congress, Roy saw he was losing out and wired Moscow seeking confirmation of his position that the revolution should be 'deepend', as opposed to the 'widening' that Borodin advocated. Stalin, who had been shaken by the news of Chiang's coup in Shanghai, wired back *with decisive indecisiveness in favour of both deepening and widening*. And the final draft of theses did call for both"; *op. cit.*, p. 254; Emphasis added.

19. Jacques Cuillermaz, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

20. M. N. Roy in "Mao Tse-tung", *op. cit.*, p. 128.

21. Dan Jacobs, *op. cit.*, p. 264

22. Tom Mann, *What I saw in China*, London, 1927, p. 24

23. Vincent Sheean, *Personal History*, The Modern Library, New York, 1940, p. 250, 236.

24. North and Eudin, *op. cit.*, pp 106-7.

25. Dan Jacobs, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

26. Dan Jacobs, *op. cit.*, p. 271.

27. *Ibid*, p. 283.

28. Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China*, p. 161.

29. *Ibid*, p. 85.

30. North and Eudin, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-7.
31. G. Adhikari (ed.), *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India*, Vol. II, PPH, Delhi, 1982, p. 576.
32. Helene Carrere d' Encausse and Stuart R. Schram, *Marxism and Asia*, Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1969, p. 167.
33. *Ibid*, p. 190.
34. M. N. Roy, *Our Differences*, Calcutta 1938, p. 68.
35. *Ibid*, pp. 29-30.
36. d' Encausse and Schram, *Marxism and Asia*, p. 233.
37. Gene Overstreet and Marshall Windmills, *Communism in India*, University of California Press, 1959, p. 118.
38. G. A. K. Lohani, *Imprecor*, VIII, 78 (1928).
39. All quotations are from M. N. Roy, *Fragments of a Prisoner's Diary, Vol. III - Letters from Jail*, Indian Renaissance Association, Dehra Dun, 1943.
40. Shaikh was the author of *The Man who Looked Ahead*, a biographical study of Roy published from India in 1938.
41. This manifesto preceded by several months the first Round Table Conference (November 1930 to January 1931) held in London to evolve a Constitution for India in pursuance of the Viceroy's announcement on 31 October 1929 that Dominion Status was the goal of the country's political advancement.
42. M. N. Roy's Letter to Political Associates, dated Dehra Dun, Oct 29, 1934 preserved in Roy Archives, File No. 111/2. John Parrick Haithocox has discussed this question at length in his *Communism and Nationalism in India : M. N. Roy and Comintern Policy*, 1920-39: Princeton University Press, Princeton, U. S. A., 1971, Chapter on "Twentieth Century Jacobinism", pp. 259-296.
43. M. N. Roy's *Letter to Political Associates, op. cit.*
44. M.N.Roy, *Scientific Politics*, Indian Renaissance Publications, pp.123-151.

4

Roy and Indian Politics

A proper estimate of Roy's activities whether in Europe or India, is not possible unless these are viewed in the context of the web of intrigue and calumny woven by British intelligence against communists in general and Roy in particular. The British Labour Party, which had turned from trade unionism to socialism after World War I, increased its strength in the British Parliament and became a potential rival of the Conservatives, the party identified with imperialism, so that both the Comintern and the British Labour Party had to be countered.

In December 1923 the British electorate returned Labour in sufficient strength to enable it to form a government in coalition with the Liberal Party. The new government in Britain accorded *de jure* recognition to the seven year old Soviet government, and followed it by a treaty on 8 August 1924. Britain was in the 1920s the largest empire ever. However, it felt threatened by the Communist International, which was declaredly subversive of all empires. Roy's status on the Comintern was not that of just a member, but of one of its leaders, and among the architects of its policy for the liberation of colonies. It was natural for the British intelligence to have singled him out for wilful discredit. The secrecy under which Roy had to work and contact people in India favoured the equally secret circulation of rumors calculated to cast doubts on his integrity. Some other factors were helpful to British

intelligence. There were Indian nationalists in exile who had collaborated with the German Foreign Office during World War I. They felt that any foreign agency desirous of subverting British rule in India should deal with them They came to hate Roy.

This aside, the British communists had never shed the idea that the proletariat in the metropolitan country alone could liberate the dependencies. Between them and Roy, friction was found to develop, more so because Roy had often to depend upon the Communist Party of Great Britain for dispatching men and materials to India. British intelligence had lost track of Roy when he went to Mexico in 1917. He surfaced again at the Second Comintern Congress in Moscow in 1920, and by the end of that year they had reports of his training Indians at the Tashkent Military Academy. By the autumn of 1921 the British were finding Roy a nuisance because communists trained by him were arriving in India overland from Russia. Many of these had come through the Pamirs and Chitral, the desolation of which territory had facilitated their detection and arrest. But Nalini Gupta, who came a few months later by sea, escaped detection, and established contacts in Calcutta, Bombay and other cities, and returned to Moscow. He came again in 1922 to meet C. R. Das, the then President of the Indian National Congress, bringing a message from Roy. The contents of the message had however, leaked out in Zurich and travelled to London, and were then wired to India by a news agency and published on the eve of the annual Congress session in an attempt to create a scare about a plan to forment a revolution.[1] This was the first mention of Roy in the Indian newspapers since his escape in 1915.

In 1921 nationalist exiles in Berlin went on deputation to Moscow — a sequence of events which has been narrated separately — and there they got in touch with Abani Mukharjee who was a member of the Comintern and along with Roy, a founder of the emigré CPI at Tashkent in 1920. The nationalist exiles sent Abani Mukharjee to India in 1922 with the express purpose of denigrating Roy. Abani Mukharjee was allowed the run of India by the British Indian government. In fact in one letter the Government of India, replying to a request from the Secretary of State for India (in

London) for the arrest of all communists, pleaded against the folly of such action. They said it would be impolitic to arrest a man "sent by Roy's enemies to India where he has been intriguing against Roy for some months" . One significant fact of the 1920s is that while all those in contact with the Communist International were arrested, tried and convicted, Abani Mukharjee, the agent of the nationalist exiles in Berlin, remained immune from punitive action by the British Indian Government. In all, 44 people were jailed in the 1920s for being communists and "agents of M. N. Roy". But Abani Mukharjee was never arrested in British India. (He is believed to have been sentenced to death in Soviet Russia in 1937.) While during the Kanpur Conspiracy case complaints were filed against Roy, Nalini Gupta, S.A. Dange, Shaukat Usmani, Muzaffar Ahmad and others, there was no case against Abani Mukharjee. The other exception was Jatin Mitra who was one of those sent to Europe in or about 1924 in response to an appeal from Roy for young men who could be trained as communists. Roy thought him a bad choice because on his arrival in Europe Roy found him to be "stupid and useless".[2] He was sent back to India by November 1925, or thereabouts. One of Mitra's letters interecpted by British Intelligence, was addressed to Sepassi, Roy's aide in Europe. It said : "You people do not realise .... the Boss (Roy) and family are living as princes.... and the boys here — real, sincere workers are starving. You hypocrites mean no business. You are simply exploiters. Your behaviour has created such a bad atmosphere, that now except a few of us all in the Punjab, U. P., Bombay and Bengal are losing confidence in you".[3] Mitra joined the Indian Communist Party formed by Satya Bhakta in 1925. Muzaffar Ahmad (one of the earliest contacts of M. N. Roy, convicted in both the Kanpur and Meerut Conspiracy cases, and a senior leader of the communist movement in India) has written that "this spurious Communist Party had a convenor whose name was struck off during the preparation of the prosecution brief for the Kanpur Conspiracy cases."[4] Its secretary, J. B. Bagerghatta was also not convicted in the case.

Roy too had serious misgivings about Satya Bhakta's party. In a letter written towards the end of 1926, Roy "repeated the contention that Satya Bhakta's Communist Party was permitted by the Government to exist for nearly 18 months, only because it was 'organised under official inspiration' and was headed by provocateurs ellipsis... the object was to use this party as a trap for all communists". One of the letters intercepted by British Intelligence was by Jatin Mitra in which he reportedly said that "If M. N. Roy would send Rs. 3000/- per mensem the organisation could be established on a firm footing ... but in spite of many requests Roy had not sent any money because his sole desire was to swell his own bank balance with money received from Soviet Russia." The quotation marks are not from the original of Mitra's letters but as reproduced by Sir David Petrie, head of British Intelligence in India at that time. British Intelligence sowed the seeds of dissension successfully in the communist movement in India with regard to funds. On one hand they alleged that communists in India were anxious to join Roy only for money, on the other was the impression created among Indian communists that Roy had access to ample funds which he was not sending them.

Money sent by Roy was often intercepted and Petrie admits that £ 50 supposedly sent to Bagerhatta was "not allowed to reach its destination. Others, besides the actual addressee, Bagerhatta, knew of the despatch of this money, and as the latter (quite honestly) continued to deny its receipt, he became an object of considerable suspicion to his hungry fellow-workers."[5] Muzaffar Ahmad narrates how as early as November 1926 he had come to suspect the bona fides of Bagerhatta (Janaki Prasad) who had then mentioned to Ahmad a chance meeting with Petrie, Director of the Intelligence Bureau of the Government of India. Ahmad concludes the reference with the following observation : "That we had suspected him rightly was proved during the trial of the Meerut Conspiracy cases."[6]

Letters from Roy and his aide Sepassi, which contained promises of funds, helped British Intelligence spread the impression that Roy was misappropriating the money, whereas remittances were

actually being intercepted by them. Satya Bhakta broke away from the CPI once the purpose of identifying the communists was served. But in 1925 and 1926 his CPI served as a means for raising the bogey of misappropiration of funds by Roy. The CPI was reorganised in December 1928 with a view to test the possibilities of an open party. The Government struck before the reorganization and on 20 March 1929 arrested 33 communists for trial at Meerut. In May 1926 the headquarters of the Indian Communist Party were transferred from Bombay to Delhi. There seems to have been no immediate reason for doing so. The change was of course convenient for British Intelligence. Bagerhatta was the Secretary, and ran the office, and Petrie had to repeatedly refer to his lack of funds. The centre at Delhi was the one which Abani Mukharjee claimed to have established on his return to Paris in March 1924. Whether Bagerhatta, who came from Rewari, close to Delhi, was Mukharjee's contact cannot be traced now.

An examination of the papers in the Meerut Conspiracy case reveals that the entire case was planned and executed with an eye to put in jail all those who were directly or indirectly associated with Roy, and to snap their ties with Roy. What had led to the arrest of the Meerut prisoners was, according to H. Williamson, Director of British Intelligence in India from 1927, "a document which fell into the hands of Calcutta police in the summer of 1928", generally known as the "Assembly Letter" because it was read out in the Central Assembly in course of a debate on the Public Safety Bill on September 1928. Actually, the document was a forgery. In *India and Communism, 1927-1935*, Williamson devotes 18 pages (117-134) to discuss the document in the chapter "The Approach to Meerut" and another 23 pages (135-157) to analyse the case.

The findings of the Meerut Sessions Court say that the letter was written by M. N. Roy, as a member of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, in Moscow, that it was despatched through Clemens Palme Dutt in London and that Muzaffar Ahmad, to whom it was addressed, probably received another copy. It was dated 20 December 1927 and would have been, the last of a series

of historical documents of its kind which came from Roy's pen. The letter was originally assigned to the 'Central Committee, Workers and Peasants Party'. He gleefully concludes that "the arrests and searches which led up to the Meerut Conspiracy case placed the authorities in a commanding position and created a vacuum in the leadership of the (Communist) movement."

Williamson however pays some tribute to M. N. Roy only to expose the real motive behind the Meerut trial. He wrote :

"Judged from an intellectual standpoint, Roy, ever a realist stands head and shoulder above all other Indian communist leaders ..... and his continuous exhortations to 'eschew the disastrous ultra-left policy' was calculated to win over many adherents to communism than Deshpande's vapourous thunderings could ever have done.... Working from behind the scenes, he succeeded in circulating an amazing amount of literature, including his new organ, *The Masses*, the counterpart of his earlier production, *The Masses of India*, which figured in the Assembly Letter."[7]

Roy returned to India during the progress of the trial in December 1930 and was later arrested on 21 July 1931 but was tried separately on charges framed against him in absentia in the Kanpur Conspiracy case of 1924. He was still in jail when the Meerut prisoners were freed. That Roy was deliberately excluded from the Meerut trial is attested to by the Junior Prosecution Counsel, the late J.P. Mitter, who claims that "the British authorities did not want the Meerut prisoners to have any contact with Roy."[8] The other reason was that the prosecution would have had to establish the genuineness of the "Assembly Letter" which they were well aware they would not be able to, if Roy was produced in the trial.

When the 'Assembly Letter' was placed in the Central Assembly on 10 September 1928, Pandit Motilal Nehru, Lala Lajpat Rai and others challenged its genuineness. The Home Member then showed the document to the members of the Assembly to prove that the letter was written by M.N. Roy in his own hand. Lala Lajpat Rai, with whom Roy had stayed in New York and who knew Roy's handwriting, challenged its veracity. Roy too denied ever having written the letter :

"I hereby declare that I did not address any such letter to anybody in India... The statement about my referring to Nehru as liasion agent is a downright lie." [9] This rebuttal by Roy was published in the *Free Press Journal* of Bombay on 15 September 1928. Later, the Workers and Peasants Party issued a statement comparing the alleged "Roy Letter" with the "Zinoviev Letter" of 1924 which the Conservative Party had used successfully to bring about the defeat of the Labour Party in the 1924 mid-term poll in England In 1966 the "Zinoviev Letter" was proved to be a forgery.

All through, British Intelligence kept constant vigilance on Roy's activities. As Evelyn Trent, his wife and collaborator from 1916 to 1925 wrote :

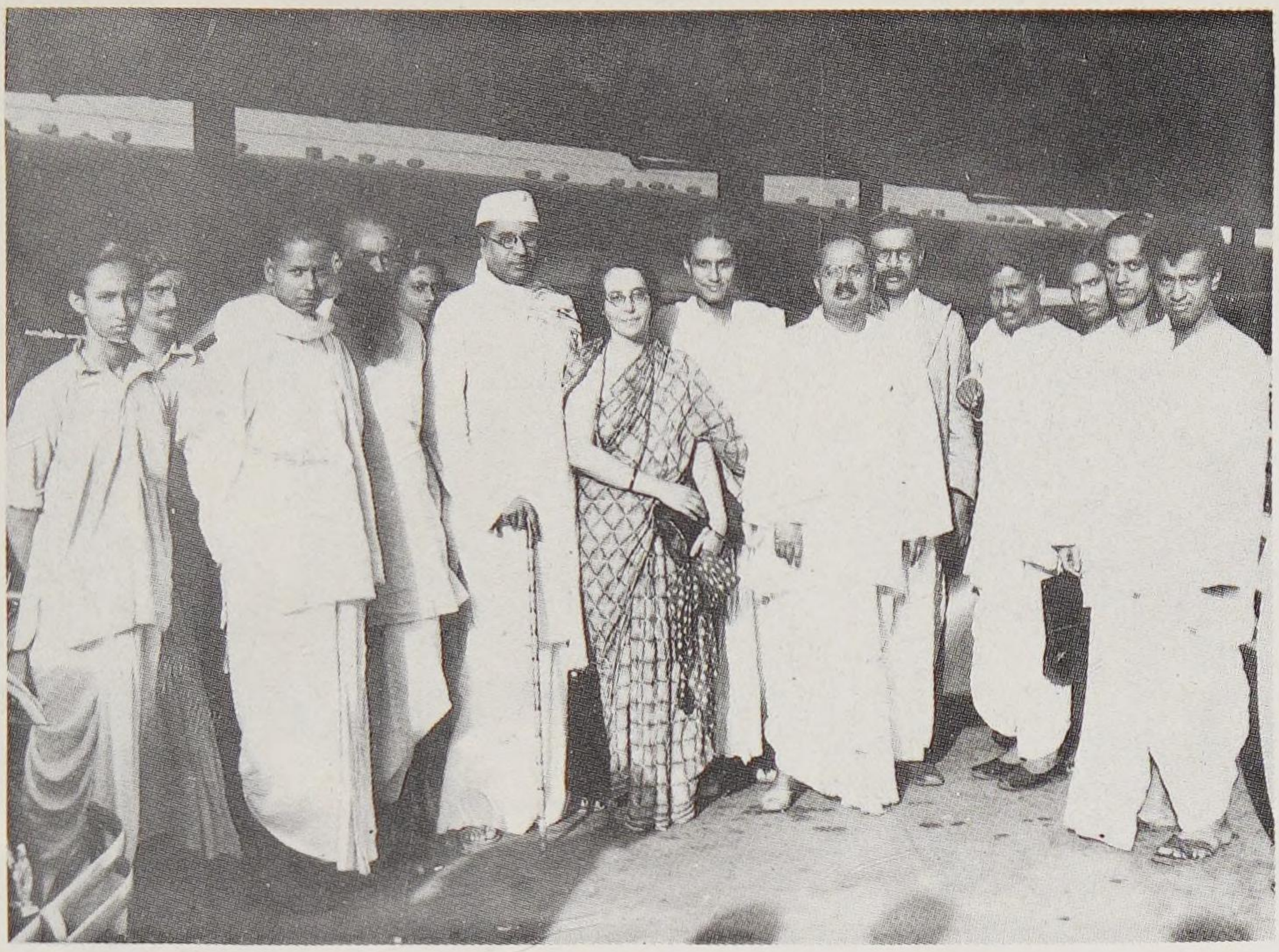
> "From 1920, M. N. Roy lived the life of a political exile abroad, hounded by secret service agents and the pressure of British authority from one European capital to another. Warrants for his arrest were issued in Germany in 1922 and in France in 1924, when he was arrested and deported at an hour's notice." [10]

Following his arrest and deportation from France, Roy himself wrote to the then French President in April 1925 :

> "The British police have not left me in peace, even in my exile. They have pursued me step by step, from one country to another, from Java to Japan, from China to Phillipines, to America, to Mexico and through most of the countries of Europe. Having taken refuge in Mexico in 1917, President Carranza, then at the head of the Government, gave me protection, and twice refused demand for my expulsion presented by the British authorities. The sympathy of the Mexican people protected me to a certain extent since 1919, when I left for Europe with my wife." [11]

Neither British apprehensions about Roy nor the latter's opposition to British rule in India evidently changed even during the course of the Second World War. A short note on M.N. Roy's activities from October 1940 to January 1941 by the British Intelligence said :

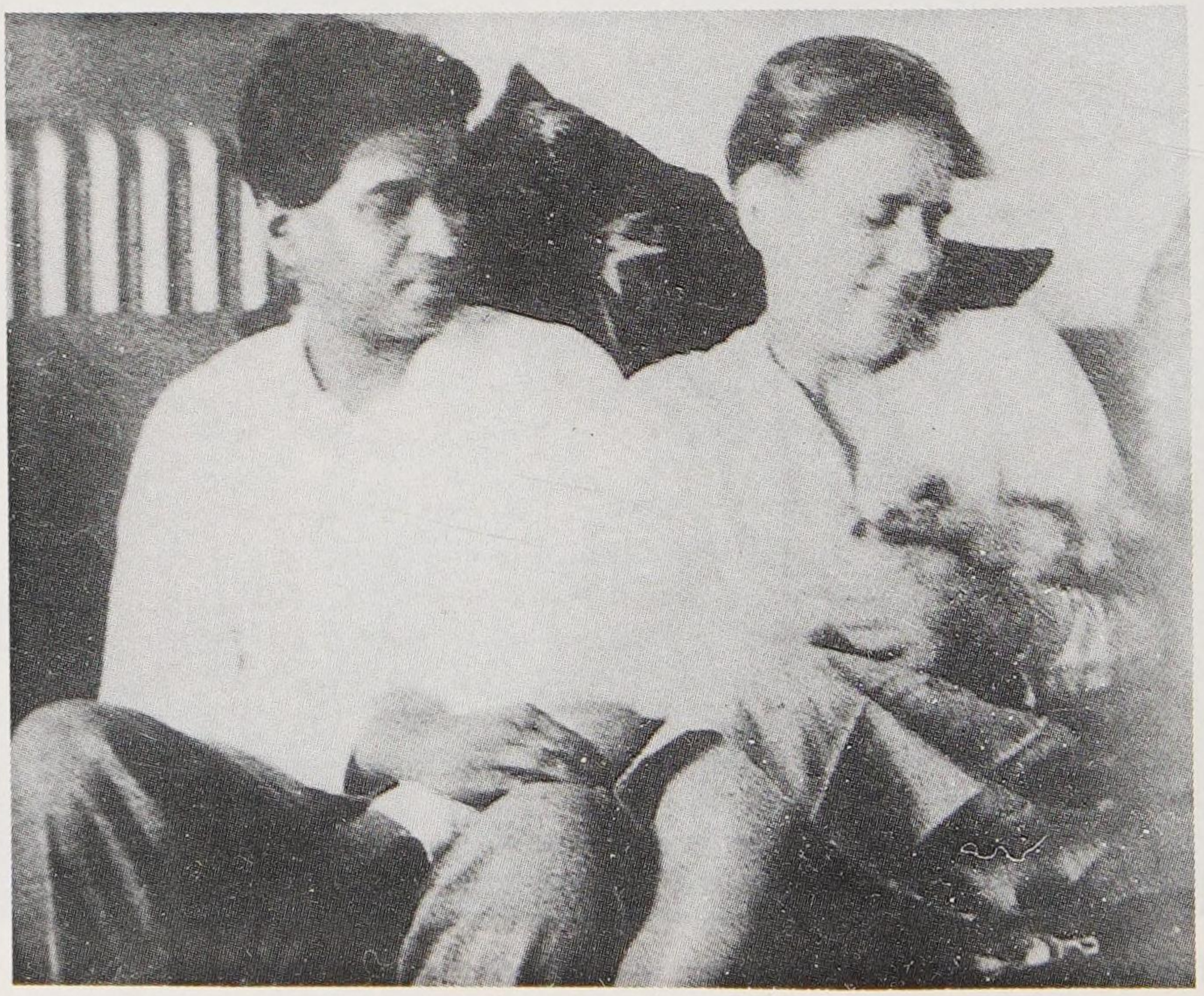
> "in private, he (Roy) explained to his more revolutionary-



M. N. Roy being received at Vishnupur railway station on his way to the Bengal Provincial Political Conference, 1938. *Left to Right* : Debsaran Das Gupta (first), M. N. Roy (fourth), Ellen Roy (fifth), Surendra Mohan Ghosh (sixth), Amar Krishna Ghosh (seventh), P. M. Sen of Patna (eighth).

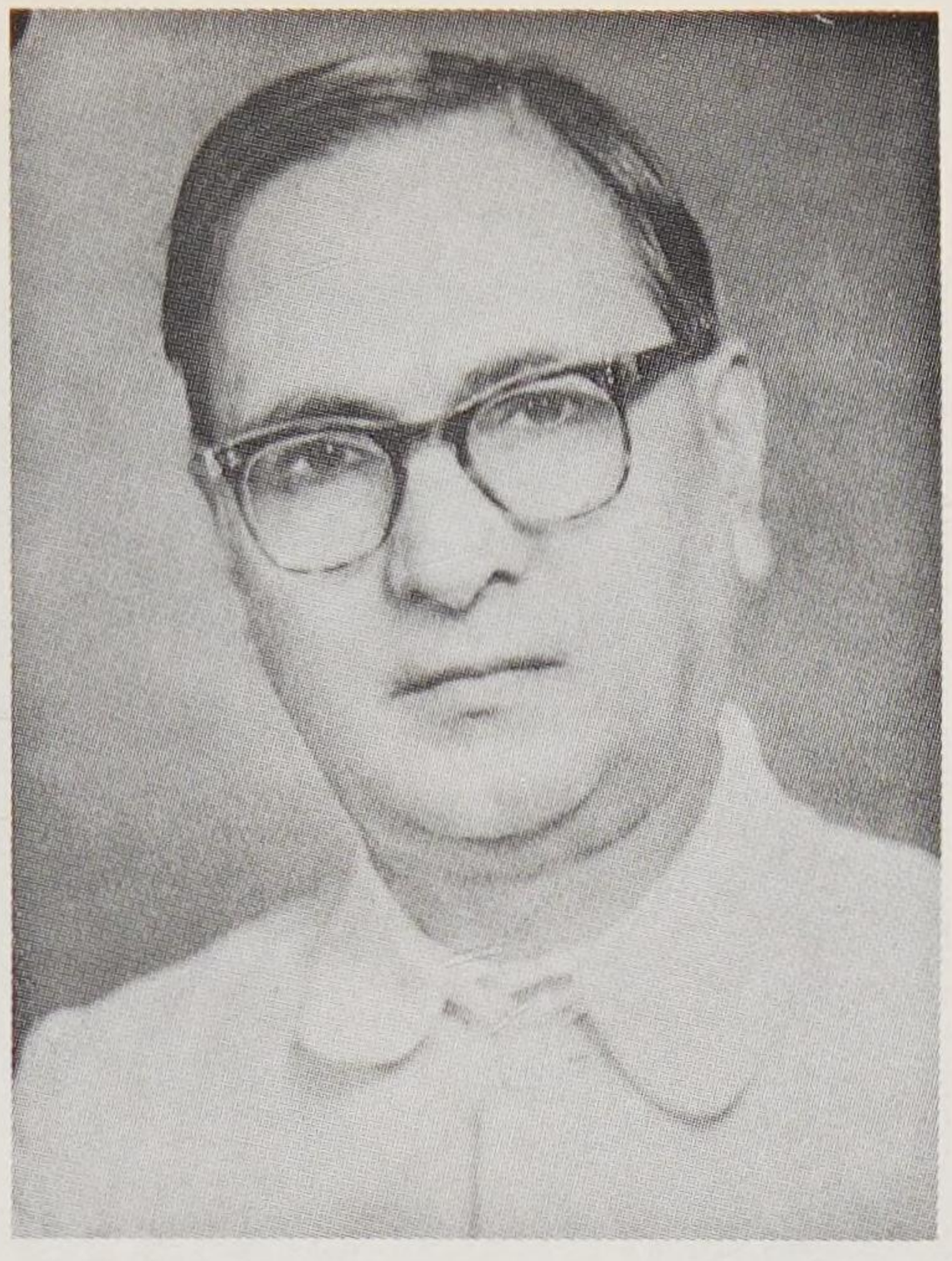
Ho Chi Minh on the extreme left in the front row and Roy standing fourth from left in the second row at the Fourth Congress of the Communist International in Moscow in 1922.

At Leningrad on the opening day of the Second Congress of the Communist International. In the foreground, Lenin, behind him Maxim Gorky; Zinoviev on Gorky's left. On Zonoviev's left, Charlie Phillips, co-founder of the Mexican Communist Party with Roy; on his left M. N. Roy; on Roy's left, Lenin's sister Maria; and fifth from left, Bukharin.
Courtesy : The David King Collection.

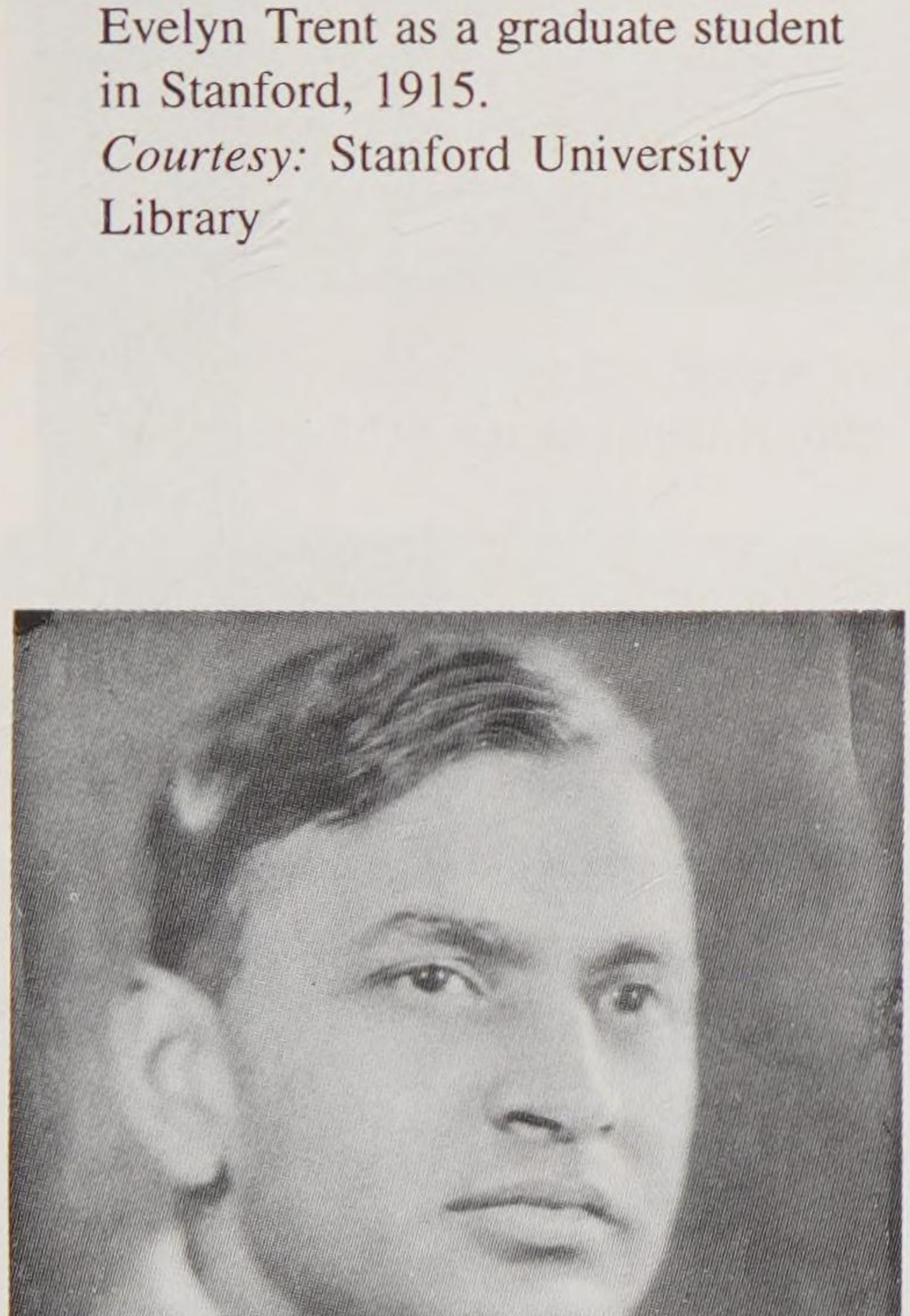


M. N. Roy and Louise Geissler in China, 1927.

Evelyn Trent as a graduate student in Stanford, 1915.
Courtesy: Stanford University Library

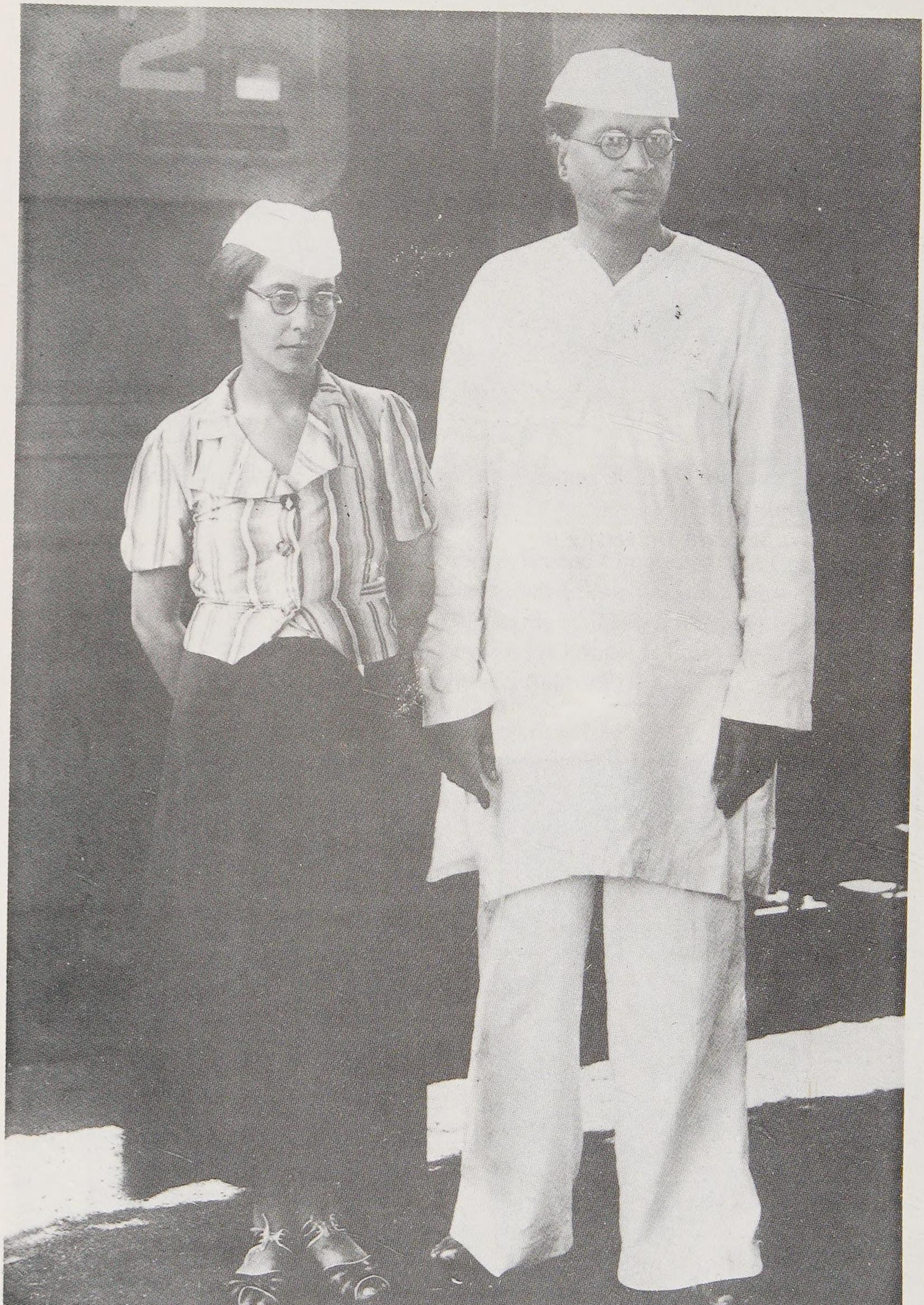


Jadugopal Mukherjee, leader of the *Yuganta* Party



Dhangopal Mukherjee at Stanford

Mrs Dhangopal Mukherjee



M. N. Roy and his wife Ellen as A.I.C.C. delegates in 1937.

M. N. Roy addressing the Bengal Political Conference at Vishnupur, Bankura in January 1938. On his right is Subhas Chandra Bose.

German Communist leader Ruth Fischer with M. N. Roy at Dehradun in 1949.

Picture of Roy, taken by Richard Park in Dehradun, while he was going over the morning mail.
Courtesy : Mrs Donna Park

TELE: 619

INDIAN RENAISSANCE INSTITUTE

(Society Registered under Act XXI of 1860)

13, MOHINI ROAD,
DEHRA DUN.
June 23

My dear Samaren,

Received your billet and the books. Thanks for the latter. May could come by Ry. parcel. It would be so much cheaper. It seems you could not find the missing volume VII. Try from some old book shop.

I am very sorry that I must disappoint the Radicals of Diamond Harbour. May should not have thought of such an idea. I have definitely retired from politics. I hope Haridas would be the candidate.

Yours
M. N. Roy

Letter to Samaren Roy from M. N. Roy.

minded lieutenants that their ultimate hopes lay in the British empire being completely exhausted after victory has been won and the common enemy fascism destroyed."[12]

That the British authorities never lost their mistrust for Roy is seen in the fact that even as late as 1943, two years after Roy had been openly campaigning for an Allied war effort with financial assistance from the British Government in India, the then British Home Member of the Government of India, Reginald Maxwell, wrote to an American Public Relations Officer on 12 September 1943, in a confidential note : "We don't trust him (Roy)... He is still an admirer of Russia, and the long range objective of his party is the creation of a Socialist State in India."[13]

If Roy's relations with the British authorities were marked by mutual hostility and suspicion, his relations with British communists were only slightly better. The reasons, to begin with, were ideological. One of the implications of Lenin's colonial theses had been that the communist parties in the metropolitan countries would have to take up the organisation of communist movements in the colonies. There was considerable reluctance in the French, Dutch and British Communist parties to take up this work. The communist parties in the metropolitan countries felt that they would be forfeiting their chances of growth if they openly advocated the cause of liberation of the colonies.

The British Communist Party had more reason than the French or the Dutch to shirk the responsibility. The Communist Party of Great Britain was a very young party. It was formed in June 1920, just a few months before the emigré CPI, and though the Marxist tradition in Britain was longer than that in India, it had a hard job enlisting members for making itself influential in the working class. In 1922 it had only 2,000, members and by March 1924 still under 4,000.[14] The CPGB's initial success had been in obtaining support from a war-weary working class against interventionist adventures in Russia, Turkey, Ruhr, Egypt and China, which could lead Britain into war again. It did not till 1925 want to arouse working class passions in India, and after 1925 the British general strike consumed

all its energy. Work among Indian sailors and students in Britain was however taken up by the CPGB in 1924, and at least the latter became important after 1930 when a fair number of Indians returning after studies in Britain were sympathetic to the communist movement, if not actual members.

At the Sixth Congress of the Comintern, the CPGB had been browbeaten into an apologetic mood for having endorsed the "decolonization" theory, which was equated by Kuusinen with Bernstein's reformism of 1890s. Roy's relations with CPGB started worsening after this, and it did not help matters that Piatnitzly ("the evil genius of the Communist International", as Roy described him) did not particularly care for him :

> It was however, quite clear that he (Piatnitzky) did not like me, and repeatedly tried to take away from me the guidance of revolutionary work in India and authorize the Communist Party of Great Britain for the task.... The only result was that many times more money was allotted to the CPGB for work in India than I ever demanded... I not only asked for a modest amount but surprised Piatritzky by returning parts of it at the end of the year.[15]

Roy hints at another reason for his bitter relations with the CPGB :

> I was victim of some internal intrigue, the history of which had better not yet be written publicly. The desire of the Communist Party of Great Britain to establish its protectorats over the Indian Communist movement had a great deal to do with it. The internal struggle of the Russian Communist Party also contributed to my victimization.[16]

However, as neither Roy nor anyone else has written about this, the facts of the matter may never come fully to light.

Be that as it may, it was clear to Roy that to start work in India, he needed local contacts. To this end, he wrote to Gangadhar Adhikari, whom he had met in Berlin when the latter was a student there. Adhikari returned to India in December 1928 and soon after attended the All India Conference of the Workers and Peasants

Party (WPP) held along with the annual session of the Indian National Congress in Calcutta in late December 1928. He was the last among the members of the Communist Party of India to have met Roy abroad. Others, except those who were in the Tashkent component of the CPI, had only corresponded with him.

In a letter dated 15 March 1929, Adhikari wrote back to Roy that Shaukat Usmani had "asked me to tell you that... he has nothing against you. Nobody here is making any propaganda against you."[17] However, just five days later (on 20 March), thirty one communists, including Adhikari, were arrested for trial in the Meerut Conspiracy case. This meant that practically everyone among Roy's Indian contacts was in jail when he returned to India. Since these people were released only in November 1933, Roy had to build fresh contacts.

Tayab Shaikh and Sunder Kabadi, who were friends in India, reached Berlin and London respectively for higher studies in January 1929. Both met Roy in Berlin during the course of the year, and became converts to communism. Roy also met Anadi Bhaduri, Adhikari's classmate in Berlin, and was able to influence him.By July 1930 arrangements were complete for all five to return to India to build a fresh nucleus. Bhaduri was probably the first to reach India followed by Kabadi, Shaikh and Singh roughly at intervals of a month each. Roy was the last to return home in December 1930. His job now was to seek out those elements within the Congress who could be sympathetic to his views.

Initially Roy had wanted the second communist group he was building up to be a just successor to the group that had been jailed. In any case there could have been no rivalry between the two till November 1933, notwithstanding his expulsion from the Comintern and his own weakness for the Brandlerite opposition. Until the Seventh Comintern Congress Roy was in fact looking forward to a rapprochement in the Comintern. Besides, there was no threat of fascism in India, and the CPI since 1925 had virtually used the Congress as the overground cover.

Members of the CPI could not participate in the civil disobedience movements between 1930 and 1934 because virtually

the entire leadership was in jail. Royists, as his followers came to be called derisively in later years in order to bracket them with Trotskites, were in search of links with the masses. Agrarian dissatisfaction and agitation which had given the Congress its mass base, after the failure of the first purely religious approach linked to the Khilafat movement, seemed the most profitable field, though not as accesible to ideologists as that of trade unions.

Roy had always been critical of Gandhi's religious approach to politics, but he did feel close to Nehru, whom he had first met in Moscow in November 1927. Nehru had participated in the League Against Imperialism, and had been sympathetic to the peasant movement in his home province, Uttar Pradesh. Subhash Chandra Bose was the other left-leaning Congressman of national stature, and he shared with Nehru the leadership of the India Independence League. Roy met both Nehru and Bose at the Karachi session of the Indian National Congress in March 1931. Subsequently, he spent some time with Nehru, but had been unable to go to Bengal and be with Bose. The third Indian leader with affinity to Roy was Jayaprakash Narayan who claimed to be a Marxist and had read Roy's *Aftermath of Non-cooperation* and *India in Transition* while studying at Wisconsin in the USA. Jayaprakash could have gone to Moscow from the US, but Rajendra Prasad (his wife's brother-in-law) prevailed upon him not to do so. Upon his return to India, Jayaprakash became active in the Congress, where Rajendra Prasad was already a senior leader.

Hence the new communist group, pending the release of those being tried at Meerut and later convicted to prison terms, was to be built within the Congress. The Congress Socialist Party, formed in 1934 by Jayaprakash, was expected to be the means for Roy's activities, but in his letters to the CSP, smuggled out of jail in 1934, 1933, 1935 and 1936, Roy expressed his disapproval of organising a party within a party. The CSP was suspicious of communists, and it was left to Roy to defend the achievements of the Meerut group. In one of his letters to the CSP, Roy argued :

> That repression effectively arrests the growth of a movement and retards the organisation of a party is evidenced by the

experience of the Communists whom you seem to scorn as an insignificant factor. They are certainly very much isolated from the Congress, and to a great extent are themselves responsible for this unfortunate position. But don't you think that their present position is very much due to ruthless suppression? Don't you think that the Communist movement would have been much stronger today had there been no Meerut case, if the pioneers of the movement had been allowed some freedom of action, at least through the press and platform? Criticise them for their mistakes : avoid the extravagances which have accentuated the difficulty of their position. But give the devil his due. They have accomplished a considerable amount of spade work in an extremely difficult situation. That is a historical fact.[18]

Eventually, however, the Royists were virtually expelled from the CSP, while the communists stayed on.

Roy had timed his arrival so as to be able to attend the annual session of the Indian National Congress scheduled to meet at Karachi in March 1931, and he did so at Nehru's invitation. Arrangements were made to keep his visit to Karachi secret because of the special vigil by the British police. The police in fact organised a "special cell" under the designation of "Operation Roy" and several photographs of Roy were circulated to policemen on duty to arrest him on sight. The police however failed to spot him as he wore the Indian pyjama and kurta and even a Gandhi cap to merge into the crowd of Congressmen. The disguise was successful enough to enable him to even sit on the dias during an open session.

At the Karachi session, Roy was able to influence the left-oriented Congress leaders, particularly Nehru, to propose a "Fundamental Rights" resolution by the Congress instead of proclaiming the Congress objective to be simply "independence". The fundamental rights resolution, in the drafting of which Roy had a hand, listed some important rights of the workers and peasants as objectives of the Congress.[19]

Between his arrival in India and until his arrest on 21 July 1931, Roy devoted his time to touring Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh to

organise a group to work within the Congress as a replacement for those undergoing trial in the Meerut Conspiracy case. He seems to have avoided Bengal where the risks of his being identified were greater.

Roy formally joined the Congress at Dehra Dun on 20 November 1936, the day of his release. The following day he proceeded to Bareilly to meet Jawaharlal Nehru. On 22 November Ranvir Verma resigned from his membership of the AICC to make room for Roy to be elected a delegate to the next session of the Congress scheduled to meet at Faizpur towards the end of December. On being interviewed by the press at Bareilly about his joining the Congress, Roy said :

> Very likely the Anglo-Indian press will misinterpret it as yet another evidence — this time decisive—that the Indian National Congress is going red.[20] Therefore I find it necessary to make it clear that the situation is just the reverse. The Congress is not becoming Communistic; on the contrary, the Communists as determined fighters for the freedom of the Indian people, are joining the ranks of the Congress. I personally have also been a persistent defender of the Indian National Congress though I could not always agree with some of the details of its policy and found it necessary to express my disagreement in critical terms.[21]

On the next day, at a reception at Lucknow, Roy added : "All the anti-imperialist forces should be rallied with the slogan of democratic freedom to be realized in the establishment of the government of the people and by the people."[22] Before he went to Faizpur, Roy spent a week with Nehru at the latter's redidence at Allahabad, ostensibly for recuperation. From there he proceeded to Bombay where a reception was accorded to him by his followers and the Socialists. At that reception Roy said that he proposed to place before the Congress at Faizpur a new scheme to consolidate the leftist forces and radicalize the Congress organization. In his address at Faizpur, Roy dwelt on his concept of a Constituent Assembly which he had been propagating since 1927 :

A Constituent Assembly means nothing less than a challenge to the self assumed prerogative of the British Government to dictate the political rights of the Indian people... For us the Constituent Assembly is not only an agitation and propaganda slogan but also a slogan for practical politics. When we raise the slogan we raise the issue of capture of power.[23]

Expounding further, Roy said that the Congress should transform itself into the Consistuent Assembly, function as a government within a government and thereby strive to replace the alien government by the Indian people's government and capture power.

On the eve of the Faizpur session, Roy had his first meeting with Mahatma Gandhi. After an hour and a half's discussion the two agreed to differ on fundamental questions. Prior to his meeting with Gandhi, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Babu Rajendra Prasad and Bhulabhai Desai, representing the right wing of the Congress close to Gandhi, met Roy on 22 December, and proposed to him that all his financial needs would be taken care of. Also he would be accorded the position of the pre-eminent leftist leader in the Congress in opposition to Nehru and made a member of the Congress Working Committee if he accepted Gandhi as his leader. Roy spurned the offer and immediately conveyed the whole discussion to Nehru, who was the President-elect of the Faizpur session, through a special messenger.[24]

At Faizpur, Nehru in his Presidential address, welcomed "Comrade Roy" as "one of the bravest and ablest of India's sons of the present generation". Nehru also opposed, under the influence of Roy, collective affiliation of workers and peasants organizations as proposed by the Socialists.[25] By the time of his release Roy had propounded the idea that there was no need for class organizations inside the Congress and that leftists should enter the Congress only as individual members.

At the Haripura session of the Congress in February 1938, where Subhas Bose was elected President, Roy urged the Congress to activate the primary Congress committees and submitted a concrete plan. The idea was to develop an organization from below and strengthen the Congress organization at the base so that policy

decisions were not imposed from above. Roy was thereby trying to create a firm democratic base within the national organization, by organizing the Congress ranks into active local committees so that the local committees functioning day-to-day could be educated in the problems of the country and could in turn educate the masses in revolutionary ideas. Through this process of activization of primary Congress Committees, Roy hoped to radicalize the Congress and consolidate leftist forces.

This was clearly in line with the views he had outlined in his letters to the CSP while he was in prison. He recognized that the social base of the Indian National Congress was much broader than that of the working class and therefore the struggle for the leadership of the Congress must take place not under the flag of socialism but of democratic national revolution. Besides, in his opinion reformist socialist parties had no future in colonial countries with backward capitalist production because the bourgeoisie in such countries were in no position to make substantial concessions to their workers. Therefore, the revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat (the genuine communists), organized in their own party outside and independent of the Congress, should he felt remain in the Congress as the most active members of the left wing, and through it, influence, change and guide the policy of the Congress. He advised the start of a mass agitation in support of the demand for a Constituent Assembly, to be reaffirmed in a manifesto issued to the rank and file of the Congress. The manifesto was to have been signed individually, the signatories appearing as Congressmen and not as Socialists or Communists. The manifesto was supposed to set forth the fundamentals of a revolutionary democratic constitution. This was to be followed by provincial left-wing conferences to consider and endorse the manifesto. Then the locument was to be submitted to district and local committees of the Congress and finally the democratic constitution to be put forth before the annual Congress session as the principle of the Constitution advocated by it.[26]

Roy was thus reacting against the received wisdon in official communist circles. "In order to play its historic role in the anti-

imperialist struggle, the proletariat must be in the multi-class organization. So the official Communists' horror at multi–class organizations is only the high road to splendid isolation. I refused to travel that road. It is too well-known a fact to be overlooked."[27] This did not, however, mean that the historic role of the proletariat had to be abandoned. The proletariat had to function within the Congress as a class not as a party. One party cannot capture the leadership of another. To say that the Socialist Party will take over the leadership of the Congress is to have the perspective of the dissolution of the Congress. Indeed, it is to say what the orthodox communists say (or used to say in the tragic period between the Sixth and the Seventh World Congress of the C.I.) that the destruction of the Congress is a condition for a successful anti-imperialist struggle.[28] The CSP, however, refused to take up the slogan of the Constituent Assembly. Roy was both puzzled and dismayed : What is is the alternative slogan? Soviet? Except the fantastic (because for a long time impractical) slogan advocated by the official communists, no alternative to the slogan of Constituent Assembly has yet been formulated from any side. This means the inability to visualise the basic political issue underlying the ideal of independence, namely the capture of power."[29] Ironically, the rift between Roy and the CSP widened precisely at the time that the communists were being welcomed into the CSP. This naturally helped the CPI, which had been declared illegal in 1934. The communist association with the Congress was fluctuating. In 1927 they were present at the Madras session of the Congress but in 1929 even those who had not been arrested in the Meerut case left the Congress following directions from Moscow. The policy changed in January 1936 and the communists again joined the Congress and functioned within the CSP. In October 1934 the CSP at its Bombay conference accepted the Royist demand for mobilization of the people on the slogan of the Constituent Assembly. The communists accepted this two years later, but qualified it by saying that the Constituent Assembly should not be considered as an alternative to the Soviets.

This question of the stage of the Indian revolution had also

been an important one at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern. The Congress decided against the continuance of the Workers and Peasants Party and declared : The Union of all communist groups and individuals scattered through out the country into a single, illegal, independant and centralized party represents the first task for Indian communists.[30] British delegates supported by Saumyen Tagore had opposed the disbandment of the Workers and Peasants Party and expressed doubts about achieving much with a single illegal party. Tagore also objected to the part of the thesis which conferred the leadership of the proletariat in the colonies on the proletarian movement in the metropolitan country. "The only leadership acceptable to us is the leadership of the Communist International," he said. Also at issue was the question of the nature and role of the Indian bourgeoisie. Kuusinen in his draft colonial programme had argued that "In India the bourgeois revolution has already reached the stage when it is no longer possible for the Indian bourgeoisie to enter the national revolutionary camp." The British delegation opposed this view. They also argued that to deny the fact of industrialization in India was to deny the existence of the proletarian class struggle, the importance of the revolutionary situation and of the revolutionary party of the proletariat. The British delegation voted against Kuusinen's thesis because it gave "a historically incorrect picture."[31] Two-class workers and peasants parties had been endorsed by successive Comintern Congresses—Third, Fourth and Fifth —and the reversal of the policy by the Sixth plunged the CPI leadership into confusion. Two meetings of its Central Committee took place : one during the first All India Convention of the Workers and Peasants Party in December 1928 and another soon after it. The WPP continued to exist till March 1929, and was brought to an inglorious end by arrests for trial in the Meerut Conspiracy case. After months of indecision and vacillation, the CPI in 1930 adopted (at a meeting held inside jail) a Platform of Action conforming to the Comintern line. The British Communist Party also slowly veered round to the Comintern line. Under the Platform of Action, the CPI was finally granted affiliation to the Comintern. Although the WPP was dissolved, communist

work within the CSP continued, and by 1937-38 two communists (E.M.S. Namboodiripad and Z.A. Ahmad) were all-India joint secretaries of the CSP and two others were on its executive. In addition, the communists were in charge of two South Indian units of the CSP which became communist units after the parting of the CSP and the communists in March 1940. In the meanwhile, however, there was another change in the Comintern line. At its Seventh (and for all practical purposes, last) Congress in 1935, the Comintern advocated the formation of united and popular fronts in all countries. The CPI Politburo in March 1936 welcomed this line and went into its implementation with enthusiasm. The Left, consisting as it then was of CSP, Royists and Communists became a major factor in the Congress and influenced to a great extent the drafting of the Election Manifesto for elections to Provincial Legislatures. For the first time the Congress put on record that it favoured a Consistuent Assembly. One of the issues of the elections was naturally the question of acceptance or rejection of the Government of India Act, 1935. Roy argued that "A Constitution could not be worked either by entering the Councils or by boycotting them but only by extra-parliamentary mass action and the electoral propaganda should be utilized for that."[32] Roy himself actively campaigned for the Congress in the elections. The Congress won majorities in seven provinces and in two others, coalition ministries were formed. The Left worked with mutual understanding as it had never before. Subhas Chandra Bose was selected by Gandhi for Presidentship of the Congress for its session at Haripura in 1938. Left unity continued unimpaired into the following year when Subhas Chandra Bose decided to run for a second term as Congress President at its 1939 Tripuri session against a candidate chosen by the right wing. Bose won by 1580 votes against his rival's 1375. The Rightists were not prepared to accept defeat and Gandhi stated publicly that it was his defeat. At the Tripuri session the Rightsts forced the issue. Even Nehru was not allowed to address the Subjects Committee before which a resolution had been tabled which enjoined upon Bose that he select members of his working committee according to the wishes of Gandhi. Earlier, on

the eve of the session, rightist members of the Working Committee resigned, saying that they felt the time had come when the country should have a clearcut policy not based on a compromise between the incompatible groups of the Congress, and urging Bose to select a homogenous working committee. In the Subjects Committee the Congress Socialists, Communists and the Royists had all opposed this motion, but for different reasons. Roy wanted a homogenous Working Committee which would exclude the Rightists in the same manner that the Leftists had earlier been excluded year after year. The Socialists wanted a slight majority for the Leftists. The Communists would have been satisfied with the Leftists having a block in the Congress Executive. All these amendments were lost by a margin of 218 to 135 votes. In the open session the Socialists remained neutral, thereby widening the margin of defeat, and blamed the Communists for going back on their promise of the previous night to remain neutral. Neither the Socialists nor Bose himself was ready to split the Congress and provide an alternative leadership, as Roy had urged him to do :

> In my opinion, Gandhi's statement does not leave you any alternative. I do not know what impression that statement has made on you, I look upon it as a declaration of war which may be waged in true Gandhian fashion, namely non-cooperation which, under the given relation for forces inside the Congress, can only be wilful sabotage for discrediting yourself and your supporters. The clear implication of Gandhiji's statement is that, at the head of the Congress, there is no room for you and those who opposed your election; one must go. The logical conclusion of that unreasonableness is that you must sacrifice yourself on the altar of unity of the Congress, under Gandhian leadership. I am decidedly of the opinion that such sacrifice would be too high a price to pay for a kind of unity which could only do incalculable harm to the Congress.....
>
> There can be little doubt regarding what is to be done in the given situation. The Congress must be given a new leadership, entirely free from the principles and pre-occupations of

Gandhism which until now determined Congress policies. Gandhist principles cannot be reconciled with honest anti-imperialist politics...

You may have to repeat the experience of Deshbandhu (C.R. Das), and must prepare for the emergency.. there is a democratic method of overcoming the difficulties created by an AICC. The way is to call a Special session which is sure to endorse the forward policy advocated by you as against any Rightist AICC.[33]

Bose, however, chose to resign from the Congress President's post. Left unity thus broke up, ironically, immediately after the Left's greatest triumph, Bose's re-election. The day Bose resigned, May Day 1939, Roy formed the League of Radical Congressmen in Calcutta. This proved a short-lived affair, and the Royists finally quit the Congress in 1940. Right-wing hegemony over the Congress was complete—Bose was isolated and was embarking on a military adventure, Royists were no longer in the Congress, Communists were expelled in 1945 and Congress Socialists in 1948.

In the meanwhile, of course, the World War II had begun. After Soviet Russia signed a no-war pact with Nazi Germany in August 1939 — a move that Roy supported — Government surveillance of Royists and Communists had become more rigorous. The following month, on the outbreak of World War II, several of them were rounded up and imprisoned. This was a bigger setback than the arrests for the Meerut trial, for in the preceding six years the CPI had grown through its Kisan Sabha and trade union activities.

The Congress Working Committee met at Wardha eleven days after the war broke out. Roy had earlier been invited to CWC meetings. This time, however, he did not receive an invitation. Nevertheless, Roy made his position clear. He urged the Congress to voluntarily cooperate with the British in the anti-fascist war. This was not entirely without precedent. After all, Gandhi had made such offers in the Boer and Zulu wars of the British in Africa, and in World War I in India.

Great Britain declared war against Germany on 3 September 1939. In reply to requests from left-wing Congressmen to call a

conference for discussing the situation and deciding what India should do, Roy issued a statement on 6 September in which he said : "All freedom-loving people will congratulate the British Government on the decision, even though much belated, to put an end to Hitlerism, which it has been encouraging all the time. Had the decision been taken earlier, the freedom of many European countries would have been saved."[34] His letter to the Congress Working committee evoked no response. Among Indian Nationalists, anti-fascism made little sense. Congress was ready for a bargain but not ready to offer co-operation in a war which it thought did not concern India. In October, Roy was opposed to the resignation of Congress Ministries in seven provinces,[35] on the grounds that Congress governments could at least ensure the maintenance of civil liberties. Gandhi had called for non-association with the War; naturally, Roy's argument found no takers within the Congress. He did not find supporters even among the communists, who argued for a line of revolutionary defeatism.

Unable to get a hearing in the Congress, in May 1940 Roy organized a study camp at Dehra Dun where he had lived several years since his release from jail. The camp was intended to clarify his group's attitude to the war, besides outlining the overall socio-political perspective of the Radical Congressmen. At the end of the camp a resolution was forwarded to the Indian National Congress leadership. France fell in June 1940, sending shock-waves throughout the world. Roy too, was dismayed. He called for a demonstration on 14 July, the anniversary of the storming of the Bastille during the French Revolution. This later became an annual event of the Radical Democratic Party. In September the League of Radical Congressmen organized a series of anti-fascist meetings and demonstrations throughout India. This action was viewed by the Congress leadership as being defiant of its policy, and the U. P. Provincial Congress Committee expelled Roy from its membership. The following month the central executive of the League of Radical Congressmen decided to organize its members into a political party outside the Congress after Roy was allowed to resign from the Congress by the AICC. The new organization— the Radical

Democratic Party—held its inaugural session at Bombay in December 1940.

In July 1941 Roy proposed to the Central Council of the All India Trade Union Congress that they should support the war effort by encouraging production. The proposal was opposed by the Nationalists which, apart from Congressmen, included Socialists and members of the Forward Bloc. Strangely enough, even after the attack on Soviet Russia the communists opposed Roy's proposal on the plea that Germany's war with Britain was separate from the one against Russia. So Roy and his followers left the Trade Union Congress and founded the Indian Federation of Labour in November 1941. The official communist line changed only towards the end of the year, when instructions from Moscow finally reached them[36].

In 1942 the war moved fast towards the borders of India. The Germans had been held up at Stalingrad but the Japanese had overrun Burma by the end of April. Till 1933, Burma had been a province of India. The evacuation of Burma by the retreating British and the presence of Japanese troops on the borders of India—threatening Chittagong, Manipur and Kohima—made the danger of the Axis powers (Germany, Italy and Japan) winning the war very real.

Britain sent Sir Stafford Cripps, a socialist and a supporter of India's demand for freedom, to negotiate with the Congress and win its support by promising Dominion Status on the conclusion of the war. But Gandhi, the sole negotiator for the Congress since the 1930 Round Table Conference, dismissed the offer as "a post-dated cheque on a crashing bank"[37] The failure of the Cripps Mission and the proximity of Japanese troops led to a feeling among Congressmen, especially the Socialists within it, that Britain would not be able to resist a mass movement aimed at its ouster from India.

The "Quit India" movement was launched by Gandhi on 9 August 1942. The Congress Socialists embarked on a programme of sabotage, which was most intense in Bihar and Eastern UP where Jayaprakash was held in high esteem. But British rule was not overthrown. On 8 November 1942 Jayaprakash escaped from

the Hazaribagh jail but the movement had virtually collapsed by then.

The tide of war began to turn in the West but not in the East. In February 1943 the German army besieging Stalingrad capitulated but the Japanese soon after attempted an invasion of India through Manipur and Kohima. Units of the 'Indian National Army' (INA), raised by Rashbehari Bose in 1941 and strengthened by Subhas Chandra Bose in 1945 from amongst prisoners taken by the Japanese after the fall of Singapore, were present in the invading force to lend it the semblance of an army of liberation. Subhas Bose had then reached Singapore by a German submarine.

Roy devoted the year 1944 to the preparation of blueprints for a free India—he wrote the *People's Plan for Economic Development of India* and a *Draft Constitution for Free India*—in anticipation of the transfer of power which he thought would quickly follow the end of the war.[38] The war was over the following year, the Germans surrendering in May and the Japanese in August. Talks for transfer of power in India began with the abortive Simla Conference in June and July 1945 which later concluded with the partition of India into two dominions in August 1947. Roy had little to do with these parleys. In any case, all radical candidates were defeated in the elections held in March 1946 on limited franchise.

In September 1945 when the tide of war had started turning in favour of Britain and her allies, Roy sent one of the senior members of the Radical Democratic Party, A. K. Pillai, to London to tell members of the Labour Party that transfer of power in India should be accompanied by changes which would ensure a fair deal to workers and peasants.[39] Roy was prepared at this point to try out possibilities diametrically opposite to those foreseen by him earlier. The fact that the Labour Party had been a partner in the wartime coalition government of Britain raised hopes of it having a say in matters relating to the colonies. Pillai had to return to India on grounds of health. A.K. Mukharji was sent early in 1945 as Pillai's succesor because Roy hoped for a Labour victory in the first post-war elections in Britain. Mukharji was not much of a success in

Britain, and was succeded by Ram Singh.[40] Unfortunately Ram Singh was not at home with Labour leaders and by temperament inclined towards the Conservatives. In the meanwhile, the U.N. Foundation Congress was held at San Francisco on 24 October 1945. Tayab Shaikh, who had been under disciplinary isolation from the rest of the Radical Democratic Party since 1941, was sent to inform the participating delegations that it was rather late for 'mere independence' and that efforts should be made to ensure exploitation by "native capitalists" did not replace that of "foreign imperialists."[41] From San Francisco, Shaikh went to London but he too was not very successful there.

In India, the bitterly charged communal atmosphere speeded up the process of Roy's isolation from the political mainstream. Roy turned to ponder over the age in which he had lived and wrote the two volumes of *Reason, Romanticism and Revolution* at the suggestion of a close friend Sudhindranath Datta, poet and critic. (Only one volume was published while Roy was alive.) Roy's political activities came to a close after the 1946 elections. The following spring the Provincial Assemblies elected a Constituent Assembly but this was very different from Roy's proposal in 1927 to the Congress to transform itself into a Constituent Assembly. Roy had proposed a directly elected Assembly on the basis of universal adult franchise but the one which met to draw up India's Constitution was indirectly elected by legislators who drew their mandate from only an enfranchised thirteen per cent of the population. On the day that power was transferred, Roy released his 22-point *Theses of Radical Democracy*, also called *New Humanism*. He had earlier, in 1946, declared his retirement from active political life : "I am not quite satisfied any longer with political activities. I can now do other work according to my inclinations." Accordingly, in September 1946, he founded the Indian Renaissance Institute. The Radical Democratic Party was dissolved in 1948. Roy himself suffered from a sense of guilt to which he gave expression at a dinner of party comrades at Patna in 1950 saying that he had spoilt the career of hundreds of young followers. Nothing would convince him that these followers had

enjoyed every minute of their activity, their penury and the hostility of the nationalists notwithstanding, they would, given another opportunity, do the same all over again.

Postscript

Roy's plan for a Constituent Assembly, which he first sent to the Indian National Congress in 1927, was turned into a non-revolutionary formal slogan devoid of its political intent, by the Congress and the Socialists. Roy wanted the Congress to transform itself into a Constituent Assembly and use that to capture power. In the process he wanted the Leftists to capture the organization of the Congress in line with his idea of "revolution from below", which he once again wanted to experiment in India. That seemed almost achieved when Subhas Chandra Bose was re-elected President of the Congress for the second term defeating Gandhi's candidate, Pattabhi Sitaramaya. But Bose surrendering to Gandhi's pressure, could not form a working committee of his own and finally resigned. The Socialists too wavered at this point weakening the Left consolidation. That was the biggest setback for Roy's plan to consolidate the left and challenge Gandhi's leadership in which he saw the most effective support for the Indian bourgeoisie trying to capture power and reach a compromise with the metropolitan bourgeosie.

Roy's draft constitution for free India, conveniently forgotten by politicians, envisioned redelimitation of the provinces (now states) on a linguistic and cultural basis, full provincial autonomy with even the right to secede from the Federal Union on certain conditions, and the *provinces were to be headed by Governors elected on adult franchise* (italics mine). Roy held that linguistically and culturally India was not a homogenous nation[42]

When the British Parliamentary delegation came to India, Roy appealed to the British Labour Party to appoint an interim government which would first carry out the economic reforms as outlined in the *People's Plan* drafted by the Indian Federation of Labour, which was Roy's alternative to the *Bombay Plan* which had been prepared by the Indian bourgeoisie in 1943, and to hold elections after five years during which a more stable situation could

develop. The People's Plan had recommended investment of the sterling balances (which by the end of 1943 had accumulated to Rs 10,000 crores) for development of the rural-agrarian sector. Roy argued that since India was a backward country, with over 75% of the population dependent on agriculture, the implementation of the plan would be a positive step towards solving the basic problem of poverty of the majority of the population and at the same time create the internal market necessary for India's industrial development.

Roy was also disappointed that the Russians had not taken cognition of the revolutionary possibilities in India and used their good offices to influence the British Labour Party that problems in this country should be solved on the lines of the proposals made by Roy on the basis of the draft Constitution and the People's Plan prepared by the Radical Democratic Party (R.D.P.) and thereby prevent the take-over of the Indian government by the representatives of the Indian bourgeoisie.[43]

In the background of country-wide violence and hatred generated against the British, the Labour government were in no position to further postpone the transfer of power, nor were the Russians interested in Roy's programme. The British also could not naturally accept Roy's proposals after the Radical Democratic Party's inglorious defeat at the 1946 elections, which, held on the basis of Hindu and Muslim electrorates and a limited franchise, limited almost exclusively their vote for the Congress and the Muslim League. So power was transferred to the Congress and the Muslim League. The Congress leaders were also in no mood to wait further and accepted power with partition.

Jawaharlal Nehru later recalled in an interview :

> The truth is that we were tired men and getting on in years too. Few of us could stand the prospect of going to prison again and if we had stood out for a united India, as we wished it, prison obviously awaited us.[44]

Indian society was divided into castes and communities. Roy belonged to an insignificant minority of those who had outgrown

those limitations. This minority was ineffective. The 22-point Theses of Radical Democracy, also called *New Humanism* that Roy released on the day of transfer of power, was the culmination of a tragedy in modern Indian history and society. After 40 years of active political life, Roy then decided to quit politics. He announced in the political study camp of the Radical Democrative Party in 1946 :

> I am not quite satisfied any longer with political activities. I can now do other work according to my inclinations ..... I feel that my leaving the party to practise politics will be good for me as well as for the party.

Two years after Roy founded the Indian Renaissance Institute as his platform for intellectual activity, the Radical Democratic Party was dissolved. He wanted to achieve social change through the process of the political struggle for freedom. In the 1940s when the myth and psyche of the Indian people had been overtaken by the cult of nationalism in its extremely irrelevant form of Hindu and Muslim rival nationalisms that became an impossible task. However in a smaller country Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh, a one time student of Roy in Moscow, who had strongly supported Roy at the Fifth Congress of the Comintern, carried out the strategy, with Soviet support, that Roy had outlined in his decolonization theses and earlier in his supplementary theses at the Second Congress of the Comintern. In his 1927 "Report on India", later dubbed as the 'decolonization theses', Roy had said :

> The movement for national freedom, as the political expression of these oppressed and exploited classes (constituting the overwhelming majority of the population) becomes a revolutionary force not only against imperialism, but also against its native allies, the capitalist and landowning classes. Class struggle coincides with national struggle.

In Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh was able to turn the national struggle into a social revolution with the Communist Party spearheading the national movement, which is exactly what Roy had recommended both for India as well as for China in 1927. But in China, in 1927, Borodin and the Chinese communist leaders refused

to permit arming of the peasants from the Hanyang arsenal as was urged by Roy, while Stalin had taken a "decisively indecisive" attitude.[45]

"In Vietnam, although it is the Viet Minh which leads the revolution, within the Viet Minh the effective leadership belongs to the Communist Party of Vietnam under the direction of Ho Chi Minh", reported the Seventh Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in May 1945.[46]

That was the relationship between the communists and the Indian National Congress that Roy had advocated for India.

NOTES

1. Roy's message to the Gaya Congress was published among other newspapers in *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, on 22 December 1922 under the caption, "Bolshevik Aim in India."
2. Muzaffar Ahmad, *Myself and the Communist Party of India*, 1970; pp. 258-59; See also Overstreet and Windmiller, *Communism in India*, p. 77.
3. Quoted in David Petrie, *Communism in India*, 1924-1927; Calcutta, 1972; p. 97.
4. On the formation of the Indian Communist Party at Kanpur in 1925, see Muzaffar Ahmad, *op. cit.* pp 407-413.
5. *op. cit.*, p. 101.
6. Ahmad, *op. cit.*, p. 441.
7. H. Williamson, *India and Communism*, (revised up to 1 January 1935, reprinted at Government of India Press, Simla, 1935), pp. 158, 164 & 168.
8. Author's interview with J. P. Mitter on 29 October 1967.
9. *Documents of History of the Communist Party of India*, edited by G. Adhikari with the assistance of Dilip Bose; People's Publishing House, New Delhi; 1982; vol. III. C 1928; p. 33. It also quotes from Meerut Record that "Jawaharlal Nehru received a cable from the 'League Against Imperialism' in Brussels which says that the alleged M. N. Roy's letter ... is an absolute fabrication." (p. 32; f. n. 24). However, Sibnarain Roy, who edited the *Selected Works of M. N. Roy*, believes that the "Assembly Letter" was in fact written by M. N. Roy, see Vol. III, p. 58.
10. Evelyn Roy's article on "Indian Revolutionaries in Exile" in *Labour Monthly*, London, April 1925.
11. *Ibid*, Roy's letter to the French President.

12. *Communism in India*, unpublished document, 1935-45; edited by Subodh Roy; Calcutta, 1976; p. 241.
13. Govt. of India; Home, Pol. : 7.17.43.
14. See James Klugman, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain*, Lawrence and Wishart, London 1968, Vol. I.
15. M. N. Roy, *Memoirs*, p. 523. Piatnitzky's dislike for Roy is traced by the latter to the fact that he supplied evidence that Borodin had not stolen the Czarist jewels, which Piatnizky had charged Borodin of doing.
16. M. N. Roy, *Our Differences*, p. ii note.
17. Overstreet and Windmiller, *Communism in India*, University of California Press, 1959, p. 133.
18. M. N. Roy - *Letters to the CSP*; Bombay, 1937; p. 55.
19. In an interview on 9 November 1975, Somnath Lahiri, veteran CPI leader told the author that he had visited the Karachi Congress and met M. N. Roy there. He added that Roy had a hand in the drafting of the fundamental rights resolution adopted at the Congress.
20. In 1922, the press received a copy of the memorandum that Roy sent to C. R. Das. British Intelligence saw to it that the letter was published in important daily newspapers to scare the Congressmen about "red infiltration" in the Congress. The letter was also published in the *Times*, London, on the eve of the Gaya Congress.
21. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, November 25, 1936.
22. *Ibid*, 27 November, 1936.
23. *Ibid*, 28 December, 1936.
24. Author's interview with K. K. Sinha, related in Samaren Roy, *The Restless Brahmin*, (Allied, 1970).
25. L. P. Sinha, *op. cit.*, pp. 435-6.
26. M. N. Roy, *Letters to the CSP, Bombay*, 1937, pp. 16-30.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
28. *Ibid.*
29. *Ibid.*
30. G. Adhikari (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 419.
31. *Inprecor*, 30 October 1928.
32. M. N. Roy - 'On Stepping out of Jail', p. 5, quoted in L.P. Sinha, *op. cit.*, p. 437.

33. M. N. Roy's Letter to Subhas Chandra Bose, dated 1 February 1939.

34. M. N. Roy, *India and War*, Radical Democratic Party publication, Lucknow, December 1942, p. 1.

35. M. N. Roy's letter to Mahatma Gandhi, dated 7 November 1939, quoted in Samaren Roy, *M. N. Roy and Mahatma Gandhi*, Minerva, 1981.

36. The Moscow decision was conveyed through the CPGB by Harry Pollitt. See also Overstreet and Windmiller, *op. cit*; p. 197.

37. "The CPI Politburo, on the other hand, proclaimed its approval of the Mission's plan and appealed to the Congress and the Muslim league to 'achieve a settlement on the basis of the Cripps' proposal." Overstreet and Windmiller, *op. cit.* p. 204.

38. *The People's Plan* was adopted at a conference of the Indian Federation of Labour in Jharia (Bihar) and the draft Constitution at the Third All India Conference of the Radical Democratic Party held at Calcutta in December 1944.

39. A. K. Pillai, a barrister and left-wing Congressman had also founded the London office of the Indian National Congress earlier.

40. Ram Singh was editor of *Vanguard*, the daily organ of the Radical Democratic Party. Later Ram Singh edited *Thought*, an English weekly published from Delhi.

41. Roy himself wanted to go to such a conference to make a final attempt for a rapproachment with Soviet leaders, but Radical Party leaders unaware of Roy's desire had already announced the name of Tayab Shaikh as Roy's representative to the conference.

42. Robert Turnbull, who covered India's Independence in 1947 for the *New York Times*, recalled in an article captioned, "Present at Creation : Memories of 47 :" "A famous Indian whose name I remember only as M. N. Roy, declared in a reflective moment, 'India is not a nation but a Congress of nations'. I thought the remark profound at the time, and events seem to confirm it as years and decades become a history that can be analyzed with the benefit of ever-lengthening hindsight" (*New York Times*, 14 August 1987).

43. See M. N. Roy's speech, "Lessons of Contemporary History" in M. N. Roy, *New Orientation*; Renaissance Publishers, 1946; pp. 104-5.

44. Leonard Mosley, *The Last Days of British Raj*; London, 1961; p. 248.

45. Dan Jacobs, *op. cit.* p. 264.

46. Helene Carrere d' Encausse and Stuart Schram, *op. cit.* p. 279.

5

Epilogue

On 23 October 1949, M. N. Roy wrote to Ruth Fischer : "Was Marx a fool or a malicious liar when he exposed the hypocrisy of the bourgeois society ?" This was three years after he had formulated his 22-point Theses of Radical Humanism, which did not reject Marxism, as could be naturally expected from a former Communist. Fischer became the secretary of the German Communist Party in 1928 for a while after Brandler and Thalheimer were expelled from the International for advocating the formation of a united front with socialists to resist rising fascism in Germany. Roy continued, "The leaders of the democratic world are still to realize the mistake of equating democracy and freedom with anti-communism... We cannot disown a spiritual kinship with the communists, notwithstanding all their stupidities and misdeeds".

Marx's famous eleventh *Thesis of Feuerbach*, that philosophy should no longer confine itself to interpreting the world but should try to change it, assumed a profound significance for Roy. Those words were written by Marx long before he had taken up writing the *Communist Manifesto* or *Das Kapital*. Roy held that the impulse behind them was moral. He is unlikely to have concerned himself with Marxism or socialism while in India. Indian philosophy had no interest in changing the world. Its emphasis was on exegesis. Changing the world was thought to be beyond human competence. A person could adjust himself to it and be successful, or become

indifferent, or renounce the world. Throughout Roy's extensive writings, there is no trace of his ever wanting to renounce the world. This is true of even the *Letters from an Indian Jail* (1931-36), in which he complains of things being made unnecessarily harsh for "harmless people like him". But most of Roy's known writings (excluding the Bengali pieces from his revolutionary days, which were unsigned to avoid police harassment) belong to the period after he read Marx. The conviction that changing the world is within human capability may also have been the seed from which Roy's humanism germinated.

In his memoirs, Roy confesses that his belief in historical materialism followed his conversations with Borodin. The Russian, who later became a close friend, had obtained for Roy an invitation from Lenin to the Second World Congress of the Communist International. That contributed to his nine years' association with the Comintern. Roy's own commitment was to undermining British rule in India. On this point he agreed more with Rosa Luxemburg and Lenin than with Bernstein or Kautsky. Some of the other participants in the Second International debates would have been as repugnant to Roy as was their patriotism during World War I.

Roy's experience of Mexico as an agrarian country may have influenced his preference for radical democracy over communism. Before he left India in 1915, industrialization had made little progress in the country. Active in distant countries and cut off from his political associates in India, Roy could not be aware enough of the Indian proletariat. In 1920 he only referred to peasants being pauperized. Though Roy was in no position to assess the role that the proletariat could play, his underestimation of that role proved correct. Even Lenin and his associates had felt that Russia was too agrarian to be fit for a communist revolution. The proletariat in industrialized countries had failed to live up to Marx's exceptations. Roy could not invest it with a bigger and better role than what it had played.

Anti-imperialism, which might have served Roy as a bridgehead to Marxism, became a step in the building of a new order. The nationalist from India would no longer be satisfied with mere

removal of British rule. His compatriots must have the opportunity to lead fuller and richer lives, free not only from foreign rule but also from native oppression.

Broadly speaking, the ideas of M. N. Roy grew out of a desire to free his country, a natural desire but initially pursued with a fanatical devotion to the belief that Hindu culture was superior to the Western. The belief did not arise out of primitive xenophobia, or out of the feeling of dispossession which members of a displaced bureaucracy, priestly class or a feudal land holding or rural group might have had. Roy did not belong to any such group, though his family looked after a small temple of goddess Kali[1], in which vocation they had not been disturbed in any way by British conquest. On the other hand he belonged to a group which had much to look forward to. English education had opened avenues of advancement which had been absent earlier. In fact the group disliked the earlier rulers, Muslims, more than the British, and the displacement of Muslims by the British had probably seemed a deliverance. There was a doubt as to whether *Ananda Math,*[2] the book Roy's terrorist group looked to for inspiration, was aimed at freedom from Muslims or the British.

The social milieu from which Roy came had remained apathetic, if not hostile, to the 1857 uprising in the British Indian army.[3] The soldiery and its leaders had little in common with the Bengalis, the community Roy belonged to. The feudal potentates on whose behalf the soldiery had risen seemed remote to English-educated Bengalis and did not excite sympathy.[4] The Bengalis of the upper castes had advanced rapidly and made much of the opportunities British rule had brought. They had entered the professions, the lower rungs of bureaucracy in large numbers, and a select few had found their way into the highest elite bureaucratic core — not through class affiliation but on merit. In Roy's youth only the indolent believed that merit went unrewarded, and Roy was not indolent.

We have to look elsewhere for the motivation behind his nationalism. One was the lack of equality between the English-educated Bengalis and the British. This touched the Bengali self-esteem, and theirs had been a demand for equality— for careers

being more open to talent than they were. This was in fact the motivation which drove Surendranath Banarjee to launch the nationalist political agitation in 1870; and Roy had begun his active political life by associating with Surendranath Banarjee in the anti-partition movement of 1905 for which he was expelled from school.

The initial motivating factor of Roy's nationalism could have been Brahminism. Even in his later life he occasionally referred to his Brahminic pride and heritage. Throughout Indian history Brahmins had not only exercised superiority over those below them but also a ritual superiority over the rulers. The Hindu rulers had conceded it from the fourth century A. D.; the Muslims had represented them, though not conceding superiority. The British attitude was roughly the same as that of the Muslims, but the eighteenth century discovery that Sanskrit (the language of the Brahmins) was etymologically close to European classical and modern language had led to a sentiment best expressed by the phrase, "the Aryan brother". On the European part Aryanism had roots in anti-Semitic emotions, on the Brahmin, as satisfying the desire for equality.

Europe's oriental renaissance extended a kind of patronage to Hindu culture and civilization that encouraged aspirations for a share in the governance of the country. It was not a democratic aspiration, but of a hierarchical group, which was recapitulating an earlier phase in its life. The Brahmins held much land, both in Bengal and outside, but the days of feudal recapture of power were gone. The 1857 uprising had proved that. Claims of cultural superiority had to be made in opposition to the reality of economic and military inferiority and hence the convenient theory that Hindu culture was spiritually superior to the European which was better in material aspects. But all claims of superiority need the backing of economic or military power. The logical corollary of the situation was the Brahmin taking to arms — not as a caste or class for which a territorial and economic base was required, but as individuals and in small groups. That was the basis of terrorism.

Roy joined a terrorist group, and this group worked for an armed uprising. The arms were to come from Germany. It was not only a

question of the enemy's enemy being a friend, but through the nineteenth century a cultural affinity with Germany had been built up. This affinity often cropped up in Roy's dealings with the Germans. It is also possible to see a connection between a terrorist group and an elitist communist party which was the Leninist innovation in Marxism. The party was of individual intellectuals, determined, disciplined and committed who adopted the interest of a numerically larger section of the population, even when that section was not fully aware of its own interests or had not been aroused.

The development of the terrorist into a revolutionary in Roy was facilitated by two events. First, following his escape from India in 1915 in search of arms Roy had landed in America and had to eventually take refuge in Mexico. Thus Roy was cut off from India, and there was no scope for conspiratorial activity in Mexico. The German connection continued but it did not call for any immediate action. It had lost its urgency. Second, the death of Jatin Mukharjee, the supreme leader of Roy's revolutionary group, had freed Roy from the promises he had made to that leader before his departure from India. The terrorist affiliation also lost its urgency.

While in America Roy came across people who became his friends and were not bound by territorial or nationalist loyalties — people like Dr. David Starr Jordan, Chancellor of Stanford University, who introduced him to a personal but powerful friend in Mexico in case Roy had to take shelter there; Prof. Arthur Upham Pope of Berkeley who staked his job to become friendly with Roy and be his liaison in the US after Roy had escaped to Mexico, and finally Evelyn Trent, a *phi beta kappa* graduate of Stanford who sacrificed a life of affluence to become Roy's wife and collaborator. In Mexico, Maestro Casas, Chancellor of the University, who took a great liking for Roy, acted as the catalyst when he declared that "It would do India no end of good if she set aside her mysticism and learned wisdom from Voltarie". That was the beginning of an exploration of European culture — for the incentive to read Cervantes and Voltaire, in Roy's words, "until then names, the former not even known"[5].

The exploration of Marxism had begun in the New York Public Library, provoked by American Radicals and probably guided by his wife Evelyn. The greater and more valuable exploration was of European culture, and it was followed through *Bibliotheca National* a dictionary of book titles with synopses of their contents, and in his turn Roy compiled one in the *Library of a Revolutionary.* One thing which struck Roy in Mexico was the level of general education of Europeans, of hardware and coffee merchants being able to converse intelligently with academicians. A German hardware merchant's wife introduced him to painting and the concept of art. Then Pablo Casals and his wife and a Polish pianist guided him to western music. Roy gradually became acquainted with the wide interests and information of the European middle class. Military power or wealth did not play any important role. The terrorist was dying, the Brahmin in him which had sworn by the greatness of his own culture was getting emaciated. Though Roy never admitted it, it seems Greenwich Village in exile had more influence on him than either Moscow or Berlin.

The realm of European culture extended from Mexico to Moscow and in the succeeding fifteen years whatever his political preoccupation he came frequently across it. The unity of the culture was surprising. Nationalism did not erect boundaries. There were some who counted French culture as their heritage; others had adopted French culture in preference to their own. Spanish, Germans, Mexicans, Spaniards, Americans, English, French and Russians were mutually intelligible to each other in cultural matters — the creators were known and so were the trends and main outlines. The narrow Hindu exclusiveness, the rejection of another culture as alien in spite of proximity, and ascriptive commitment were absent. This certainly was one of the great achievements of the Russian revolution in its early years, and the international fervour that had influenced the intellectuals in the twenties and the thirties were lost after World War II with the resurgence of nationalism.

Roy had outgrown cultural nationalism in Mexico, and since the basis of his nationalism was cultural, he outgrew nationalism

itself. Marxism might have helped by providing an ideological basis, but the breadth of European culture made Marxism look like a narrow doctrine. This attitude persisted with him throughout though he was prone to think of Marxism as a method of understanding European history and civilization. The meeting and prolonged discussions with Borodin in Mexico gave him an understanding of European culture from the Marxist viewpoint. He tended to attach the greatest importance to the Renaissance till August Thalheimer[6] introduced him to pre-Renaissance scholasticism in which elements of humanism were present. The theory of history which Roy adopted was European — begining in Greece and Rome, eclipsing under medieval Christianity and re-emerging during the Renaissance and growing continuously thereafter. As an individual he opted for European culture; in nineteenth century Bengal, the basis for such adoption was provided by Derozio and Macaulay though the large number of his countrymen were unenthusiastic about the adoption of European culture. The position was made easy for Roy on his discovery that French "was almost the mother tongue of all Mexican intellectuals". Bengali intellectuals used English in the same manner but were apologetic about it.

Roy went to Europe from Mexico more consciously prepared to respond to it, whereas he had come to America still living in a different spiritual world and on his own admission had not been able to benefit by the new environment. He went to Europe eagerly looking out for the privilege of witnessing a renascent Germany - the home of philosophy, poetry, music, science, purged of the scourge of Prussian militarism. He was not disappointed. Modern socialism having attained theoretical maturity in Germany he enjoyed the company of Eduard Bernstein, Kautsky, Hilferding, Eduard Fuchs, August Thailheimer and Ernst Meyer, and was struck by their humaneness and good humoured mutual tolerance.

Roy's approach to Marxism was neither political nor economic; it was philosophical. In Mexico he and his friends had built up, to quote Roy, a "small cosmopolitan community of free human beings," but Roy rejected arrogant proletarianism as well as the

adoption of bourgeois manners and attitudes. He had come to the conclusion that "intellectual aristocracy being a common human heritage, it alone could lay down the foundation of a really new social order.[7] He also believed that the eighteenth century was an age of intellectual aristocracy, and that in that century the characteristically European culture reached its high water mark. Roy was in agreement with Antonio Gramsci that the philosophical aspect of Marxism needed to be revised so that it could offer something to the idealistically inclined.

Roy's attention was also drawn towards Muslim religion and culture. He had had to deal with many Muslims and so he worked on aspects of Muslim relationship with the global culture which was European. He conjectured the Muslims had taken over Greek learning, preserved it during the medieval ages, and then passed it on to Europe and unintentionally prepared the ground for the Reniassance. This is an over simplified statement but it did link Muslims with European culture. This study of Roy later appeared as *The Historical Role of Islam*.

The need for linking Indian culture with the European remained. In Mexico Roy had attempted a Marxist interpretation of Indian history which was published under the title, *India's Past, Present and Future*. It did not go far beyond rejecting Aryanism, pointing out that Indian culture was derived from pre-Aryan elements and arguing that the social structure and cultural pattern of ancient India could not be essentially different from contemporary civilizations elsewhere. The idea of the parallel development of Europe and India continued to haunt Roy, but the rest of his efforts belong to a later period, after his return to India. The emphasis was on discovering an ancient humanist and naturalist thought contemporary with Greece's and comparable to it, which was submerged under medieval theological and idealistic thought. His book, *Materialism*, which he called "an outline of the history of scientific thought" was a preliminary study on that line.

Roy's approach to European culture was different from Nehru's, the only other Indian leader of pre-independence India with an international outlook. Nehru had subscribed to the idea of a global

development of history but when it came to India he adhered to the view that India's backwardness was due to foreign subjugation and not that foreign subjugation was the result of backwardness. As far as manufacture, trade and balance of payments were concerned, India and Europe were at par early in the eighteenth century, but not culturally. Nehru thought the difference between India and Europe was because of the Industrial Revolution, and an industrialized India could equal Europe. He never paid thought to the fact that the industrial revolution was not the anecdotal accident of Watt watching the steam raise the lid off the kettle, but the result of sustained intellectual activity and craftsmanship since the Renaissance. Roy put more value on the Renaissance and the Enlightment than on the Industrial Revolution. There he also recognised the limitations of economic determinism.

No other Indian has tried so seriously to relate Indian civilization with the European. Roy thought of European culture as the culture of humanity — a global culture which had drawn its source from diverse cultures of antiquity and made tributary those local cultures it came in contact with in its maturity. Roy's achievements and contributions are many and varied. But what has ensured for him a permanent place amongst revolutionaries is perhaps his attempt to rescue back for Marxism its deep humanist basis. Distrustful of both nationalism and religion, Roy took his cue from two sources : Epicureans, among the ancients, and Utilitarians among the moderns. Protagora's "Man is the measure" and Bentham's "the greatest good of the greatest number" had special attraction for him. Individual freedom in a prosperous collective was his prescription, though Roy realized that it was hard to achieve proper balance when the profit motive (which he saw as selfishness) had been raised into almost a moral principle. His *Radical Humanism* was not a utopian programme. He did not conceive of humanity ever attaining perfection, and rigorously pruned the definition of truth as what we know. Every formulation was subject to revision in the light of accruing knowledge.

Roy held that Marxism was humanist and that a communist order should remove a major shortcoming of the French

Revolution : that equality in franchise was not accompanied by economic equality. That, in his opinion, would have been an advance over the bourgeois democratic revolution. Hence he advocated radical democracy for India and China.

Till 1946 "Red Napoleonism" meant to Roy a liberalizing development recalling Napoleon carrying the gains of the French Revolution to the countries he conquered. But Roy did not want the Russian Revolution to be carried by force to Europe. In July 1946, he wrote a series of critical articles titled, *If I were Stalin*. His contention was that Russia and communism must appear as a liberal humanist force in Europe. "Red Napoleonism" to him only meant the substitution of fascism by communist totalitarianism. Communism had, on the contrary, to appear as a liberating ideology to be acceptable to civilized Europe.

Phillip Spratt, the number one accused in the Meerut Conspiracy case, that has observed Marx Eastman distinguished three impulses behind the socialist movement—for freedom, for fraternity and for order; Roy points out a fourth which is conspicuously present in all the socialist movements and thinkers—the moral motive, the demand for a better order... People want socialism because they see that moral corruption is an essential part of capitalism, the system cannot work without lying, cheating, profiteering cruelty and unfairness, and they hope that socialism will get rid of these things. It is a moral motive, independent of the other motives and is a strong one. It may be regarded indeed as the fundamental motive of the socialist movement.[8]

A biographical study of M.N. Roy cannot be a mere chronicle of events, or a story of the role played by him in diverse countries and situations, or even a vindication of the strategy and tactics he had advocated at different times. The ideas he clashed with, and the age have to be accorded proper significance. Ideas and events are interwined. The events of Roy's life, or in other words, the manner in which he acted or reacted to developments, were to a great extent determined by the ideas he held at the time of a particular decision taken by him. He was not a successful man in the ordinary sense of the term. If he had acted differently from his

ideas he would have been an opportunist and if he refused to revise his opinions he would have been dogamatic and unrealistic. Yet by the time he died in January 1954, he was a forgotten man. Perhaps no other Indian had dedicated his life in such totality to internationalism and received so little acknowledgment.

Notes

1. M. N. Roy belonged to a priestly Brahmin family. His father was the last hereditary head priest and trustee to the temple of the goddess Ksheputeswari, in Midnapur district in south-west Bengal. The temple had large land holdings which the head priest enjoyed. Roy's father, Dianbandhu, left his ancestral village and vocation and took up the job of Sanskrit teacher in a village school near Calcutta. See also M. N. Roy's article, "Disintegration of a Priestly Family" in the *Radical Humanist*, Feb 4, 1954.
2. The novel *Ananda Math*, written by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee based on the revolt of the Hindu sanyasis against the rulers during the famine of 1772-74 and the secret societies which the sanyasis organized provided the ideological organizational basis of the millitant revolutionaries of Bengal.
3. See Samaren Roy, *The Roots of Bengali Culture*; Chapter on "Eighteen Fifty Seven"; Firma KLM Pvt. Ltd., 1981. Even Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar allowed the British garrison to be stationed inside the Sanskrit College to quell the rebellion.
4. Bipin Chandra Pal, *My Life and My Times*.
5. M. N. Roy — Memoirs; Allied Publishers, 1956, p. 86.
6. The German Communist leader who was a close associate of Rosa Luxemburg wielded great influence on Roy and the two became great friends since 1920 when Roy arrived in Berlin on his way to Moscow. Thalheimer was also an authority on Sanskrit grammarian, Panini, which was probably another reason for their freindship, which lasted even after Roy returned to India to be jailed for 6 years. In his "Letters from jail", Roy regularly wrote to his wife, Ellen Gottschalk, to seek guidance from Thalheimer about the researches he was doing while in jail.
7. M. N. Roy, Memoirs, p. 165.
8. Philip Spratt, *New Orientation*, Calcutta, Renaissance, 1946 p. xxxii.

Index

Acharya, T Prativadi 56, 57, 58, 59
Adhikari, Gangadhar 106-7
Ahmed, Muzaffar 61, 100, 101, 102
Ahmed, Z. A. 115
All India Trade Union Congress, 119
Alvarado, General 15, 18, 26
American intellectuals sympathy for India 15-6
'Ananda Math' 130
Anglo-Soviet Trade Agreement 54-6, 98
Anushilan Samiti 4-5, 6
Aurobindo, Sri 1, 3, 6, 12

Bagerghatta, J. B., 100, 101, 102
'Bande Mataram' 5
Banerjee, Jatindranath 7-8
Banerjee, Surendranath 3
Bankim Chandra 3
Barkatullah 10, 11, 56, 57, 58
Belur Math 2, 4
Bengal, anti-partition agitation 3-7
  reformers 1
  revolutionary movement,
    German assistance to 3-7, 8-9
Berlin Committee of Indian Revolutionaries 11, 39, 41, 59
Bhaduri, Anadi 107
Bhattacharya, Avinash 3, 5
Bhattacharya, Dinabandhu 1, 3
Blum, Leon 91-2
Borodin, Michael 22-3, 28-30, 39, 54, 67, 72, 74, 75, 78-9, 80, 124, 129, 134
Bose, Ksudiram 5, 6
Bose, Rajnarain 1, 2
Bose, Rashbehari 12
Bose, Saileshwar 3, 4
Bose, Satish 4
Bose, Subhash Chandra 107, 111, 115, 116, 117, 122
Brahmo Samaj 2
Brandler, Heinrich 42, 85, 87, 88, 89, 128
British Labour Party 98, 120, 123
Bukharin 83, 86

Calles, Plutarco Elias 27-8
Carranza, President 19, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29
Carrare d' Encaussee and Stuart R. Sharam 46
Chakravarty, Harikumar 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
Chattopadhya, Virendranath 11, 56, 59, 60
Chattopadhyay, Amarendra Nath 6
Chen, Tu-hsiu 65, 67, 74, 79
Chiang Kai-shek 67, 68, 72, 73, 74, 77, 78
Chicherin 54
China 53, 64-81, 124
Chinese Revolution 47
Chou En-lai 66, 73
Chu Teh 66
Communist International (Comintern) 92, 98
  Chinese policy of 69-80;
  and colonial theses of M. N. Roy 64-5
Congress, Second 30;
  Commission on National and Colonial Question at 45
Congress, Third 50-1; colonial question at 50-1
Fourth 51-2
Fifth 53
Sixth 83, 106, 114
Seventh 115
and fascism, response to 85
Communist Party of China 65, 66-7, 69, 71-2, 74, 77, 124

Germany 128
Great Britain 53, 61, 99, 114; and M. N. Roy 105-6
India (emigre) 54, 56, 60-1
India 100, 101, 102, 107, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117
Mexico 29-30
Congress
leftists 109, 116, 117, 122
rightists 115, 116, 117
Socialist Party 113, 115, 116, 119, 122, *See also* Communist Party of India, Indian National Congress, Royists
Cripps, Sir Stafford 119
Curzon, Lord 3, 55

Dange, S.A. 61, 100
Das, Taraknath 11
Datta, Bhupendra 5, 11, 39-40, 56, 60
Datta, Umesh 2
Debs, Eugene Victor 22
Desai, Bhulabhai 111
Don Manuel 26
Doriot, Jacques 88, 91, 92
Dwarkanath, Vidyabhusan 1, 2

East Club 3, 7
'El Heraldo de Mexico' 26, 28
'El Pueblo' (The People) 18, 25
Engles 44

Fischer, Ruth 92, 128
France 90

Gandhi, Mahatma 20, 108, 111, 115, 116, 119, 122
Germany 3-7, 809, 11, 128, 131-2
'Ghadr' 8
Ghadr Party 8, 11
Ghate 61
Ghosh, Aurobindo, see Aurobindo
Ghosh, Barin 1, 5, 6, 7
Gomez, Manuel 25-6, 27
Gottschalk, Ellen 86
Greenwich, Irwin 25, 27
Gupta, Herambalal 11
Gupta, Nalini 40, 60, 99, 100

Hardayal, Lala 8, 10, 11
Ho Chi Minh 124, 125
Howrah conspiracy case 6-7

Indian
Federation of Labour 119, 122
Independence Committee 11
National Congress 3, 107, 108-15
organisations in U.S.A. 10
Renaissance Institute 121, 124
Revolutionary Association 56-7, 58
Iron Army 68, 69, 72, 75
see China, Kuomintang

Jacobs, Dan 75, 77
Japan 12-3
Joffe, General 65, 67
Jordan, Dr David Starr 13, 15, 18, 132
Joshi, S. L. 10
'Jugantar' 5

Kabadi, Sunder 107
Kanpur conspiracy case 100
Kar, Nalini 4
Karakhan 54
Khairi brothers 56
Khankoje, Pandurang 59, 60
Kuomintang 66-70, 73, 76
rupture with Communist Party of China 78
and Soviet Russia 73
see also Chiang Kai-shek
Kuusinen 83-5, 106, 114

League of Radical Congressmen 117, 118

Lenin, V.I. 29, 43-6, 47-9, 51, 54, 55, 56, 129
Levi, Paul 42
Liu shao-chi 66
Lovestone, Jay 92
Luhani, G.A.K. 40, 59, 60, 62, 84
Luxemburg, Rosa 44, 129

Mahendra Pratap 56, 58, 61
Majid, Abdul 57, 58
Majumdar, Bhupati 6
Majumdar, Panchanan 5
Manuilsky 53
Mansoor Dr Mohammed 11
Mao Tse-tung 66, 75, 79, 80
Marx, Karl 44, 128-9
Meerut conspiracy case 102-3
Mexico 18-30, 133-4
  American liberals in 25-6
  politics in 25
  Socialist Party of 25, 26, 27
Minzenburg, Willi 85, 90, 92
Mirajkar 61
Mitra, Jatin 100, 101
Mukharji, A. K. 120-1
Mukherjee, Abani 39, 57, 58, 60, 99-100, 102
Mukherjee, Dhangopal 13
Mukherjee, Jadugopal 13
Mukherjee, Jatin 4, 5, 6, 8-9
  death of 12

Namboodripad, E.M.S. 115
Narayan, Jayaprakash 107, 119
nationalist revolutionaries 7-8
Nehru, Jawaharlal 107, 109, 110, 111, 123, 125
Nehru, Motilal 103
'New India' 5
Nirvan Swami 6
Nivedita, Sister 3

Obregon, General 26, 27, 28

Patel, Sardar Vallabhbhai 111
Philips, Charlie, *see* Gomez, Manuel
Piatnitzky 106
Pillai, A. K. 120
Pillai, Champakaram 11
Pope, Arthur Upham 13, 16-7, 22, 132
Prasad, Rajendra 107, 111
Puri, Ramnath 10

Quelch, Tony 50
'Quit India' movement 119-20

Rabb Barq, Abdur 56, 57, 58, 59, 60
Radical Democratic Party 118-9, 120, 121, 123, 124
Rai, Lala Lajpat 15, 17, 20, 103
Ramchandra 8, 10
Ramdas Babaji 2, 4
Roy, Dr Aswin 4
Roy, Evelyn, *see* Trent, Evelyn
Roy, Kalinath 5
Roy, M. N.
  background 1
  early life 2
  revolutionary activity in Bengal 3
  member of Anushilan Samiti 4-5
  meets Jatin Mukherjee 5
  as active revolutionary 5-8
  trip to Batavia 9; USA 9-10; Japan 12-3
  life in USA 13, 15-8
  adoption of new name 13-4
  in Mexico 18; intellectual growth 20-21; meeting with Borodin 22,3, 28; acceptance of socialism and materialism 23; aborted arms purchase mission to China 24; editor of 'La Lucha' 26; as general secretary of Socialist Party of Mexico, 28; importance of Mexico

stay in international and political development 30
attends Second Congress of Comintern 30
and presents Theses on National and Colonial Question 39, 43-6, 47-50
Writes Indian Communist Manifesto 39-42
attends mecting of German Communist Party 42
theory of non-capitalist path of development 44
Marxist approach to colonial question 47-50
contribution to debate on world economic situation 50-1
attends Fourth Congress of Comintern 51, theory of decolonization' at 52
attends Fifth Congress of Comintern, directs communist activities in India 52-3
in Tashkent as Head of Central Asiatic Bureau of Comintern 55
and as head of Indian Military School 55, 56
founds Communist Party of India 56
in Moscow as Political Commisar of the Communist University of Toilers of the East 56
as leading Asian member of Comintern 56-62, 64
in China to implement Comintern programme 69-80
decolonization theory of 80-5, 106, 124
expulsion from Comintern 85
in Germany 85-6
in India arrest upon arrival 86-92
'Our Task in India' manifesto 93-5
discrediting by British communists 105-6
relations with Congress Socialist Party 108
'Fundamental Rights resolution by Indian National Congress 109'
joins Indian National Congress 110
concept of Constituent assembly 110-1, 122
plan for activization of Congress Committees 111-2
resigns from Indian National Congress 118
writes 'Peoples Plan for Economic Development of India' 122-3
writes draft constitution for Free India 120, 122
isolation from political mainstream 121
Theses of Radical Democracy 121, 124
Theses of Radical Humanism 128
belief in historical materialism 129
motivation for nationalism 129-34
philosophical approach to Marxism 134-5, 136
as internationalist 137-8
Royists 108, 109, 115, 116
leave India National Congress 117

Safarov, G. I. 50, 53, 58
Safdar, Abdulla 61, 62, 93
'Sandhya' 5
Santibanez, Ignazio 25
Saradananda Swami 4
Satya Bhakta 100, 101, 102

Sen, Satyen 8
Sepassi, Mohamed Ali 57. 58, 60, 61, 100, 101
Serrati 50, 81
Shafiq Mohammed 57, 58, 60, 61
Sheean, Vincent 76
Singh, Ajit 8
Singh, Kartar 8
Singh, Kissen 8
Singh, Mota 60
Singh, Ram 121
Sivanath Sastri 1-2
Smedley, Agnes 18, 59
Sneevliet 50, 65, 81, 87, 88, 91
Snow, Edgar 79, 80
Socialist Conference in Mexico 26-7
Socialist Party of America 14
Socialist Party of Mexico 25-7, 39
Soong, T.V. 78, 79
Sovinterprop (Soviet International Propaganda) 57, 58
Spanish civil war, Russian policy in 91, 92-3
Stalin 70, 71, 76, 83, 90, 125
Starr-Hunt, John 11
Sun Yat-sen 12, 46, 66, 67, 68
Sun Yat-sen, Madame 76, 77, 79

Tagore, Rabindranath 21
Tagore, Sanumyen 83, 84, 114
Tayab Shaikh 107, 121
Terrorism in Bengal 3-7, 131
see also nationalist revolutionaries
Thalheimer, August 42, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 92, 128, 134
Thorez, Maurice 90-1
Trent, Evelyn 13, 14, 17, 20, 21, 29, 30, 39, 56, 57, 58, 60, 104, 132, 133
Trotsky 51, 70, 75, 86, 88

Usmani, Shaukat 58, 60, 61, 62, 100, 107

Vidyasagar, Pandit Ishwar Chandra 1
Vietnam 124, 125
Vivekananda, Swami 2, 3, 4

Wang Ching-wei 68, 70, 74, 76, 77, 78, 79
Workers and Peasants Party 106, 114
World War II 117-122
Wu Pei-fu 73

Samaren Roy (b. 1919) first met M.N. Roy in 1939 who since then stayed with the author's family in Calcutta each winter. Between 1944 and 1952 Samaren Roy edited and published a number of journals in Bengali and English and contributed articles in newspapers and journals on cultural and political subjects in India and abroad. From 1952 to 1955 he studied *Navya Nyaya* in a *tol* and produced a monograph on the rationalist schools of ancient Indian thought. From 1956 to 1983 he was political analyst at the American Consulate General in Calcutta.

He has written a number of books in English and Bengali among which are : *Indian Thought : A Critical Survey* (1956); *The Restless Brahmin : Early Life of M. N. Roy* (1970); *The Twice-Born Heretic : M. N. Roy and Comintern* (1986); *India's First Communist* (1988); *M. N. Roy and Mahatma Gandhi* (1987); *The Roots of Bengali culture* (1981); *The Story of the Vedic People* (1987) and *Calcutta : Society and Change 1690-1990* (1991) in English and *Manabendranath 'O' Antarjatik Communism* (1984); *Ashanta Brahman* (1985) and *Jeler Chithi* (M. N. Roy's letters from jail) in Bengali.

SAMAREN ROY

M.N.ROY

A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY

Designed by Susetta Bozzi

Orient Longman

T2-DJQ-665